●近代麻雀コミックス●

福本伸行

FUKUMOTO NOBUYUKI 7

TEN

TENHOU-DOORI NO KAIDANJI

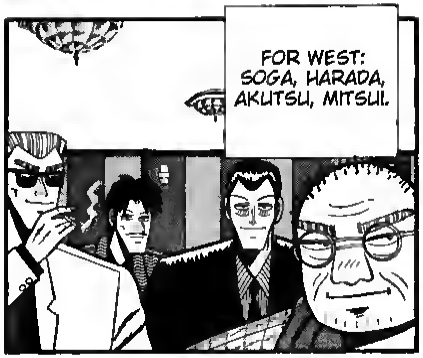
天和通りの快男児

THE NICE GUY ON THE PATH OF TENHOU

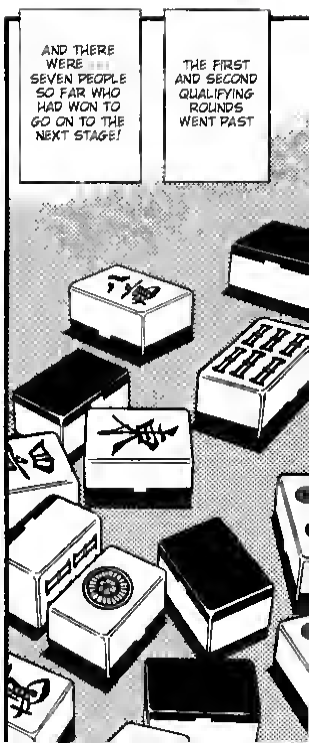
竹書房
TAKE SHOBO

CHAPTER 57
A SECRET PLAN

THE UNDERWORLD SHOWDOWN BETWEEN EAST AND WEST!


FOR WEST: SOGA, HARADA, AKUTSU, MITSUI.

FOR EAST: TEN, AKAGI, GINJI.

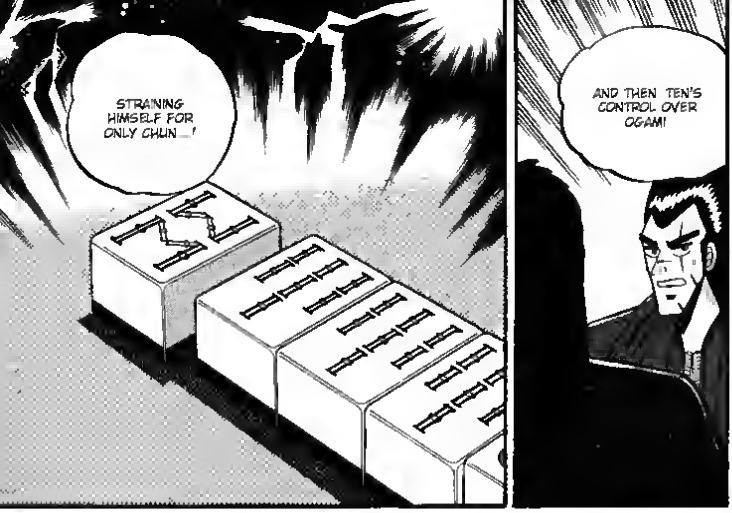

AND THERE WERE SEVEN PEOPLE SO FAR WHO HAD WON TO GO ON TO THE NEXT STAGE!
THE FIRST AND SECOND QUALIFYING ROUNDS WENT PAST

ONE SEAT LEFT TO THE SHOWDOWN ROUND...
AT LAST, THE GRAND FINALE...!
OR NANGOU... OR OGAMI...?
WHO WOULD WIN...? WASHIO...
OR PERHAPS...

HIROYUKI...?

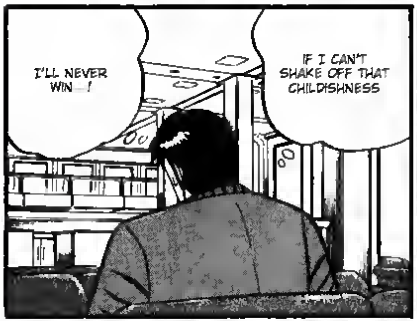
I GOTTA SAY, HIRO...
THE FACT THAT YOU HAVEN'T DONE WELL SO FAR
ISN'T
BECAUSE YOU'RE TECHNICALLY ANY WORSE THAN ANYONE ELSE HERE...
TEN'S WORDS AFTER I LOST TO HARADA...
IT DIDN'T JUMP INTO MY MIND AT THE TIME, BUT
NOW, I UNDERSTAND REALLY WELL... THE THING THAT TEN WAS TRYING TO SAY...

GOING FOR THE WIN WITHOUT CARING ABOUT HOW IT LOOKS.
EVERYONE ELSE IS WORKING HARDER.
IT'S MY ATTITUDE.
CHUN, 1 DORA
AKAGI'S DISGUISED RINSHAN-KAIHOU
THE UNMATCHED STRENGTH OF GINJI'S DEALER BAIMAN WITH GANPAI


STRAINING HIMSELF FOR ONLY CHUN—!
AND THEN TEN'S CONTROL OVER OGAMI

WHILE CONTINUING TO DEAL OUT MANZU WITHOUT FEAR OF DEALING INTO OGAMI'S HAND—!
HE LURED OUT NANGOU'S 1-PIN IN THE LAST ROUND

I'VE BEEN SHOWING OFF...
TRYING TO BE A SMOOTH PLAYER.
WHAT AM I, COMPARED TO THAT...?


I'LL NEVER WIN...!
IF I CAN'T SHAKE OFF THAT CHILDISHNESS

I'M THE ONLY ONE WITH A CRAPPY ATTITUDE...

SHIT !

NO MATTER WHAT I HAVE TO DO.....
I'LL DO IT TO WIN...!

WIN...!

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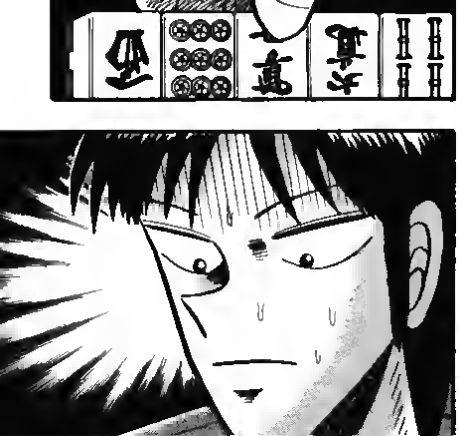
THE EAST-WEST QUALIFYING ROUNDS
LIKE IT OR NOT, THIS ONE LAST HAN-CHAN ...!
EAST: WASHIO AND HIROYUKI.
WEST: NANGOU AND OGAMI...!
THE FINAL BATTLE.

TO THE SHOW-DOWN .....!
IS THE ONE LAST TICKET...



.....
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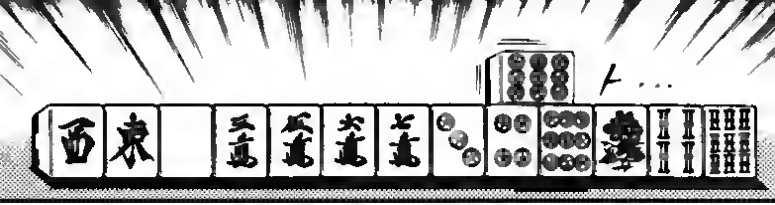
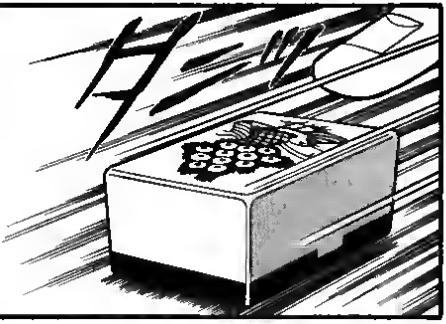
HIROYUKI'S HAND
BY FAR
THESE OTHER THREE PLAYERS ARE BETTER THAN ME.
.....
A SURPRISE ATTACK...!
SOMETHING THAT WILL BETRAY THE EXPECTATIONS OF EVERYBODY WATCHING
IT'LL HAVE TO BE BY A SURPRISE ATTACK...
IF I'M GOING TO WIN





OKAY, LET'S GO...!

I DON'T KNOW WHETHER OR NOT IT'LL WORK...
THIS PLAN

BUT I CAN'T WIN AGAINST PLAYERS LIKE THESE GUYS BY PLAYING AIMLESSLY ...!

I'M READY FOR IT...!

BUT I'LL TRY IT AND SEE IF IT PAYS OFF...!
IT'S A LONG SHOT .....
A SECRET PLAN ...!
EAST 1ST ROUND, 8TH TURN

HIROYUKI IS IN TENPAI.
BUT THE 6-PIN IS A RISKY TILE TO PLAY AGAINST WASHIO.....
.....DISCARD THE 6-PIN AND HE'S IN TENPAI, HUH.....
.....
HUH...?
OR AT LEAST, UP UNTIL NOW THAT'S WHAT HIROYUKI WOULD DO.....
SO DISCARD THE 9-PIN HERE?
IT'S NOT A HAND THAT'S WORTH FIGHTING THE DEALER, WASHIO, FOR

URGH...!
HE WENT FOR IT——
BUT IT'S...?

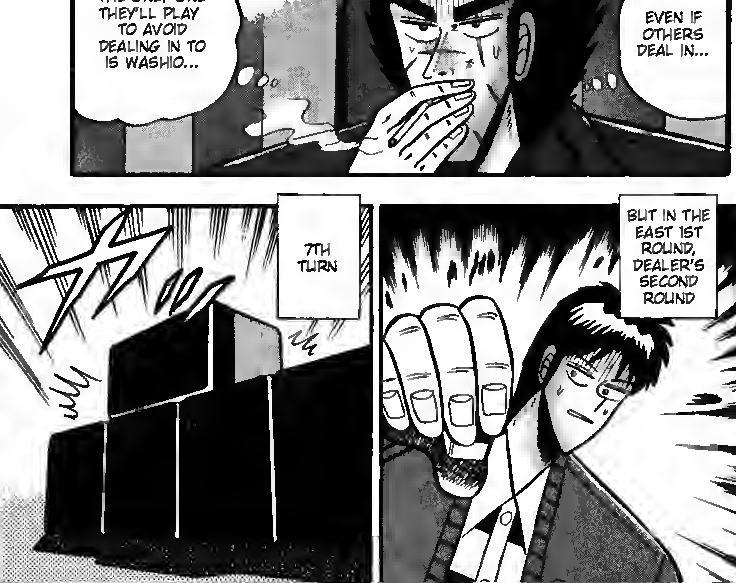
MENZEN TSUMO, TAN-YAO, PIN-FU, 1 DORA.
RON.

DEALER MANGAN ...!

... THAT'S NOT LIKE HIRO...
.....
.....
チャラ
HE WAS OUT BY 12000 POINTS AT THE VERY BEGINNING

FOR A WHILE, HE'LL BE THE TARGET FOR THE OTHER THREE TO BEAT.
ON THE OTHER HAND, IT PUTS WASHIO OFF TO A GOOD START.
IT'S NOT IN HIS NATURE TO GO DIGGING HIS OWN GRAVE LIKE THAT...
THAT MISSTEP MUST'VE HURT.

THE ONLY ONE THEY'LL PLAY TO AVOID DEALING IN TO IS WASHIO...
EVEN IF OTHERS DEAL IN...


7TH TURN
BUT IN THE EAST 1ST ROUND, DEALER'S SECOND ROUND

HIROYUKI IS IN TENPAI.
FORCEFULLY DISCARDING THE 6-MAN...!
URGH...
HE DID IT...!
STRAIGHT AHEAD, AGAIN...
DISCARD THE 6-MAN AND IT'S A CLOSE WAIT ON THE 3-SOU...!
SO, DISCARD THE 2-SOU HERE...?
HE CAN'T RISK RUNNING INTO WASHIO ANY MORE AFTER LAST TIME
BUT AGAIN IT'S A RISKY TILE AGAINST WASHIO

RON...!
MENZEN TSUMO, TAN-YAO, PIN-FU, 1 DORA
7700, AND WITH THE SECOND ROUND AS DEALER, THAT'S 8000...!

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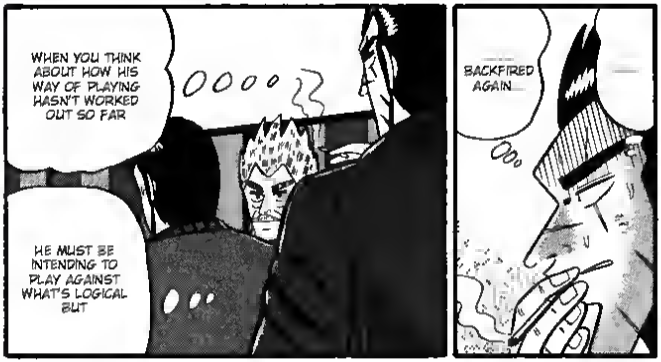
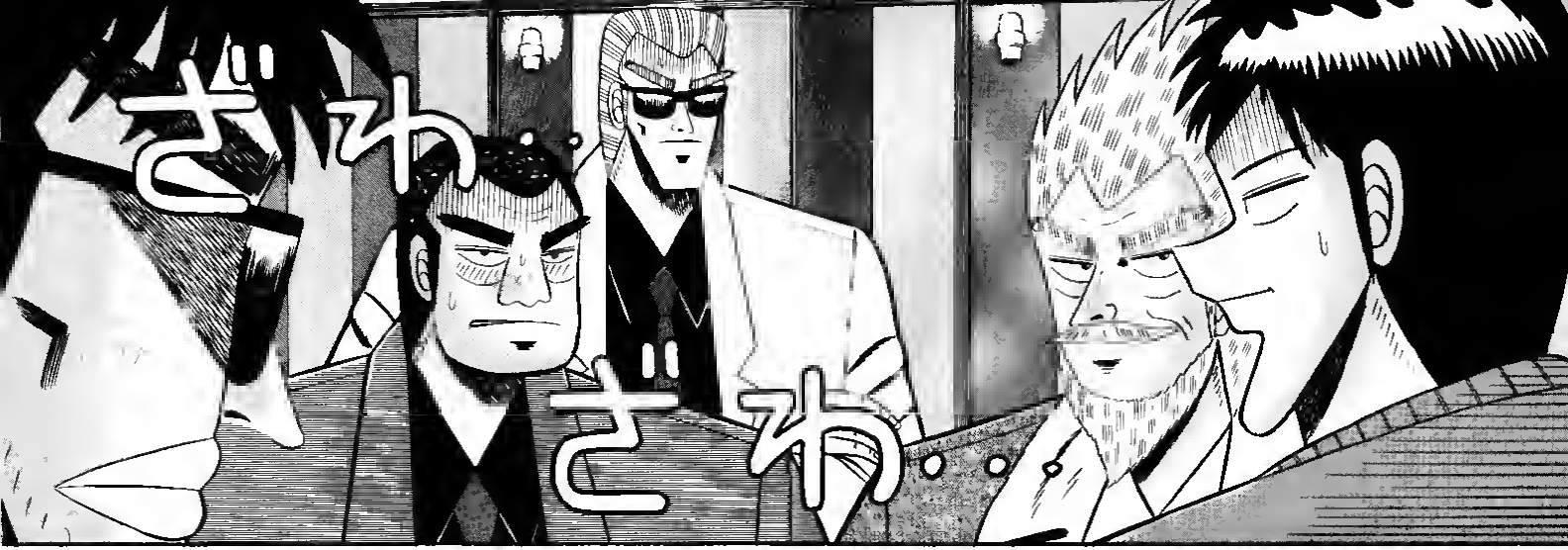

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT HOW HIS WAY OF PLAYING HASN'T WORKED OUT SO FAR
HE MUST BE INTENDING TO PLAY AGAINST WHAT'S LOGICAL BUT
BACKFIRED AGAIN…

THROUGH HIS COMPLETELY WRONG CALCULATIONS
THE GAME JUST STARTED AND HE'S ALREADY LOST 20000 POINTS…
WILL EXPLODE ON YOU, PLAIN AND SIMPLE !
MAKING A STRONG DISCARD WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE THE FLOW
六萬
發

AREN'T YOU GOING TO HURRY UP AND GET OUT OF THE LINE OF FIRE...?
HIROYUKI .....!
SO FAR, IT WAS ALL GOING ACCO-RDING TO PLAN ...!
NO ...!

CHAPTER 58
EAST'S POISON
Young Men'S Connection
EAST
SPORTSWEAR/SCRYWEAR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WELL... EAST SURE PULLED ONE OVER ON US...
I SEE...
THEY FIGURED OUT WHO WAS GOING TO WIN AND WHO WAS GOING TO LOSE AHEAD OF TIME...
THEY MUST HAVE BEEN PLANNING TO HAVE HIROYUKI GIVE UP AND LET WASHIO RUN FORWARD...

A HUGE NUMBER OF POINTS WERE MOVED QUICKLY IN THE BEGINNING DURING THE EAST 1ST ROUND
THE FINAL FIGHT OF THE EAST-WEST BATTLE'S QUALIFYING ROUNDS...
ONLY HIROYUKI HAD FALLEN DRAMATICALLY, HOLDING A MERE 5000 POINTS
AND
WEST'S TWO PEOPLE WERE AT THEIR STARTING 25000 POINTS
WASHIO HAD THE LEAD AT 45000 POINTS

THEY'LL BE CERTAIN OF SENDING ONE PERSON TO THE SHOWDOWN
IF THAT'S WHAT THEY AGREED ON, IT'D BE THE BEST WAY TO WIN
RATHER THAN WASTE ENERGY BY COMPETING
OR HIROYUKI MADE THE DECISION ON HIS OWN, BUT
I DON'T KNOW IF THE TWO OF THEM TALKED OVER HOW THEY WERE GOING TO FIGHT IT OUT...
IT'S A GOOD STRATEGY.
WOULDN'T BE AGREED UPON.
BUT NORMALLY, SOMETHING LIKE THAT...

IT'S TOO BAD. BUT...
WEST'S CHANCES FOR WINNING THIS FINAL BATTLE ARE SLIM...
WHEN THERE'S A DIFFERENCE IN ABILITY LIKE THERE IS WITH EAST, IT'S OBVIOUS. BUT AT LEAST WEST WILL STILL BE PUTTING UP A FIGHT.
WHO WOULD GIVE UP THEIR CHANCE TO ADVANCE TO A SEAT IN THE SHOWDOWN?
IT'S JUST IMPOSSIBLE TO DO THE KIND OF TEAM PLAYS WHERE ONE PERSON GIVES UP ON THEIR OWN HANDS...

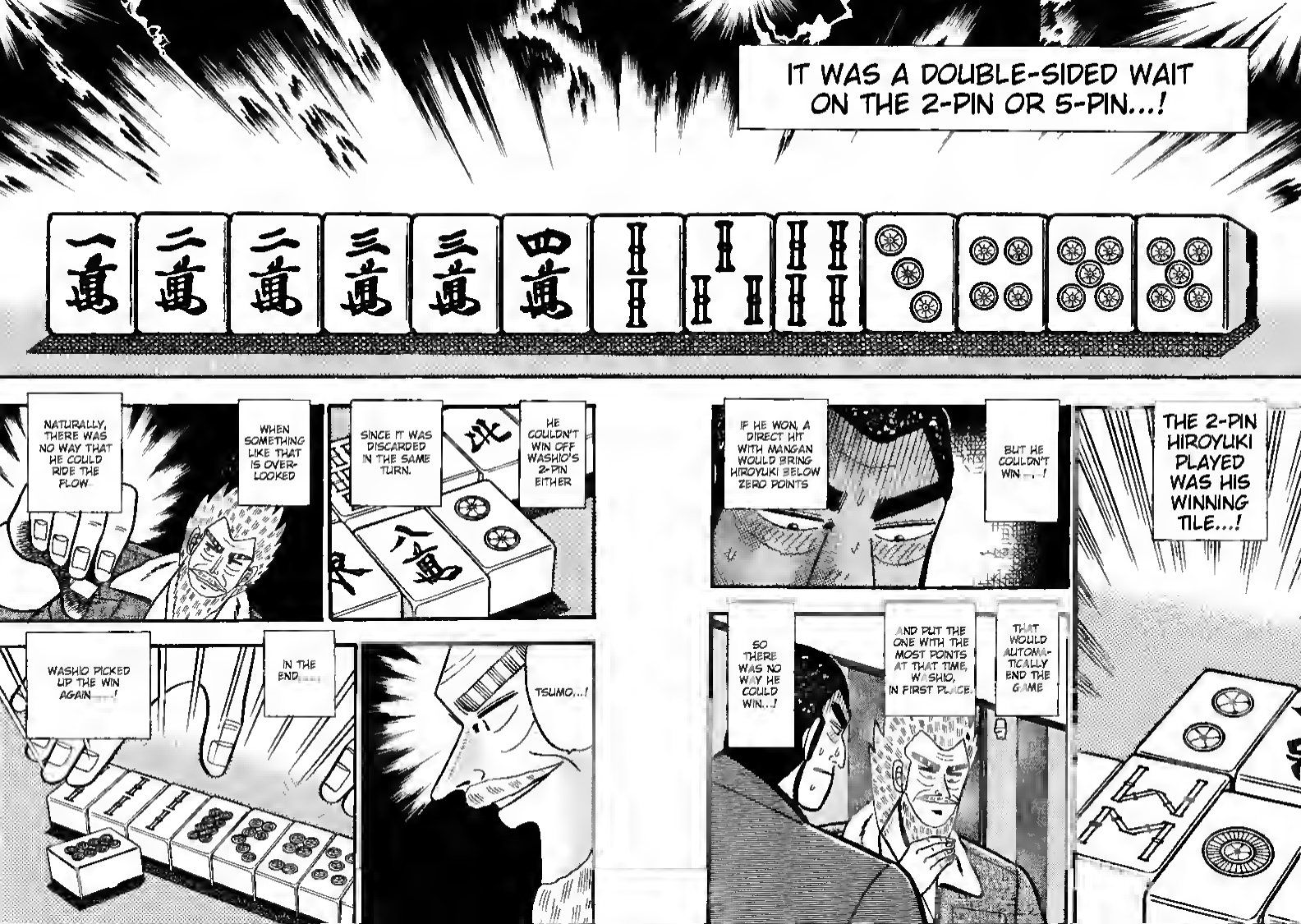
YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING
I'M NOT GONNA LET IT BE OVER THAT EASILY
A 20000 POINT DIFFERENCE EARLY ON AT THE START, HUH
SHIT...
NANGOU'S STARTING HAND
FORTUNATELY IT'S A GOOD STARTING HAND...
AND MY DRAWS AREN'T BAD EITHER...!

ALL RIGHT ...!
LOOKS LIKE NANGOU'S HAND IS GOING TO BE A FAST ONE
IS HE READY TO GO OUT...?

I JUST HAVE TO LET THIS 2-PIN GO THROUGH, BUT.....
WASHIO'S HAND
JUST AVOID A DIRECT HIT.....!
I SHOULDN'T RISK IT
THERE'S A 20000 POINT DIFFERENCE
IT'S RISKY HERE.....
THE 2-PIN ...!
PLAYED A STRONG TILE...!
BUT NEXT TURN
HIROYUKI

URGH ...!
.....
DID THAT FINISH IT...?
WASHIO ALSO PLAYED THE 2-PIN.
THAT'S A BIG HELP.
HMMMM.
SO THE 2-PIN WILL GO THROUGH THEN.....?
IT WENT THROUGH...!
WASHIO'S HAND

OR IS HE STILL NOT READY TO GO OUT...?
BUT IF THE 2-PIN WENT THROUGH
THEN WHAT COULD NANGOU POSSIBLY BE WAITING ON...?
NO...!
PIN-FU, SAN-SHOKU, 1 DORA, WITH A GOOD WAIT...!
NANGOU'S HAND WAS READY...!


IT WAS A DOUBLE-SIDED WAIT ON THE 2-PIN OR 5-PIN...!
一萬 二萬 二萬 三萬 三萬 四萬
NATURALLY, THERE WAS NO WAY THAT HE COULD RIDE THE FLOW.
WHEN SOMETHING LIKE THAT IS OVER-LOOKED
SINCE IT WAS DISCARDED IN THE SAME TURN.
HE COULDN'T WIN OFF WASHIO'S 2-PIN EITHER
WASHIO PICKED UP THE WIN AGAIN.....!
IN THE END.....
TSUMO...!
IF HE WON, A DIRECT HIT WITH MANGAN WOULD BRING HIROYUKI BELOW ZERO POINTS
BUT HE COULDN'T WIN.....!
SO THERE WAS NO WAY HE COULD WIN...!
AND PUT THE ONE WITH THE MOST POINTS AT THAT TIME, WASHIO, IN FIRST PLACE.
THAT WOULD AUTOMA-TICALLY END THE GAME
THE 2-PIN HIROYUKI PLAYED WAS HIS WINNING TILE...!

SHIT...!
ゴゴゴゴ
THE DIFFERENCE IN POINTS OPENED UP EVEN MORE, TO 28800...!
WASHIO WON THREE TIMES IN A ROW AS DEALER
TRYING TO RUN HIS WAY UP TO THE FINAL SEAT IN THE SHOWDOWN...!
ONLY WASHIO WAS RACING FORWRD...!
NOW HE HAD A MERE 2800 POINTS LEFT.
HIROYUKI WAS WORSE OFF THAN BEFORE...

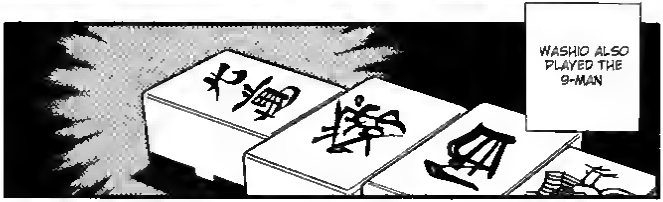
.....
EAST 1ST ROUND, DEALER'S FOURTH ROUND...!
NANGOU'S HAND
I HAVE TO SCORE A HIT AGAINST HIM WITH THIS FLOW...
I'M STILL GETTING SOME MOMENTUM WITH MY DRAWS...!
IT'S GETTING THERE...!
SHIT...!

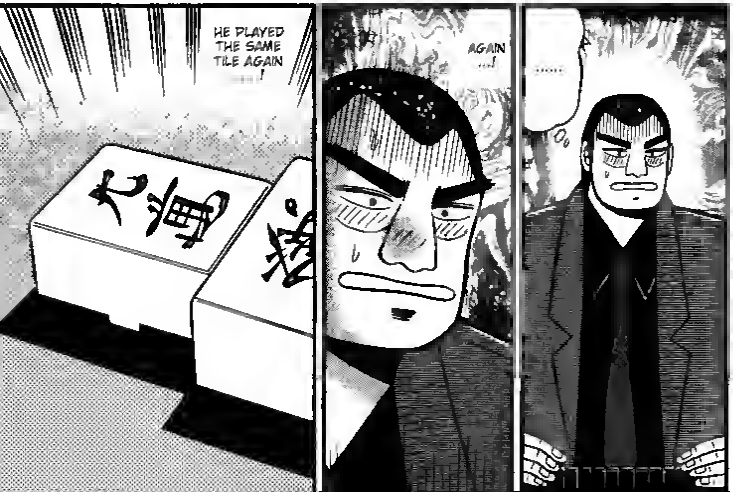
COME ON...!
ALL RIGHT...!
COME ON...!

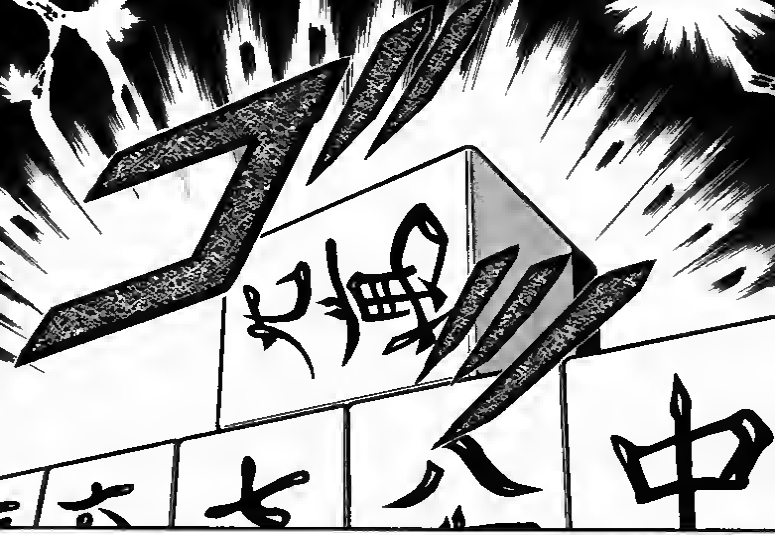
NANGOU: IN TENPAI WAITING ON 3-MAN, 6-MAN, OR 9-MAN.
CLOSED HAND HON-ITSU TENPAI, IN A MERE SIX TURNS...!
ALL RIGHT, I DID IT...!

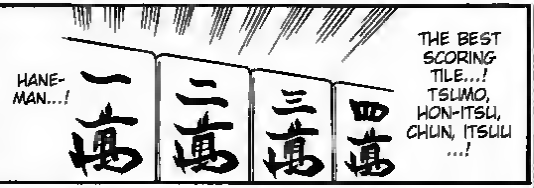
.....I HAVE TO WIN THIS HAND SOMEHOW .....
一萬 二萬 三萬 四萬 五萬 六萬 七萬 八萬 中 中 中 北 北
URGH ...!
AND IS PLAYING RECKLESSLY ...!
THIS BRAT KNOWS HE CAN'T BE HIT
ONE OF HIS WINNING TILES, THE 9-MAN...!
九萬

RIICHI.
SHIT...


WASHIO ALSO PLAYED THE 9-MAN


HE PLAYED THE SAME TILE AGAIN!
AGAIN...!
.....

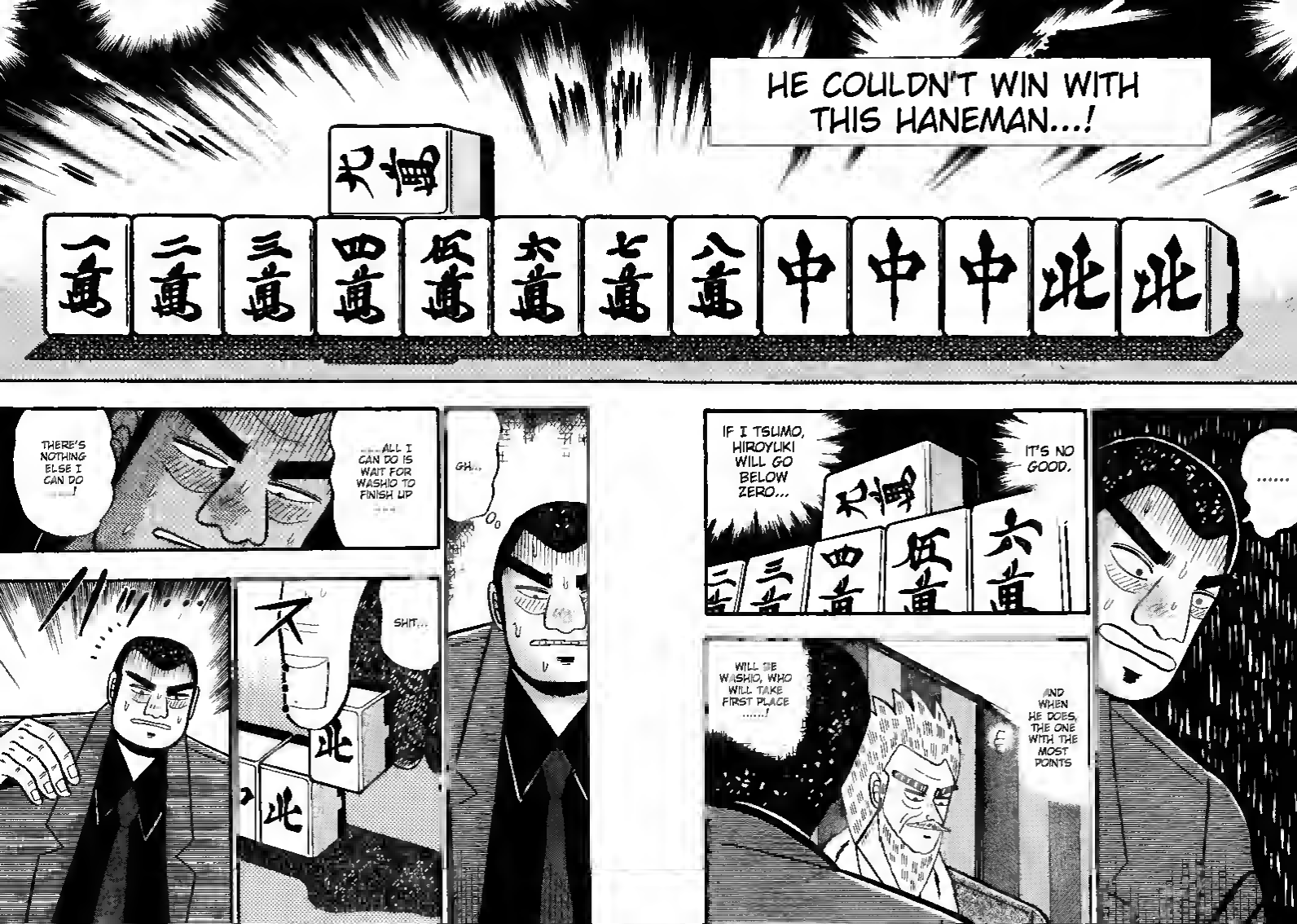



HANE-MAN...!
THE BEST SCORING TILE...! TSUMO, HON-ITSU, CHUN, ITSUU ...!

URGH...!

BUT...

I DID IT...!


HE COULDN'T WIN WITH THIS HANEMAN...!
一萬 二萬 三萬 四萬 伍萬 六萬 七萬 八萬 中 中 中 北 北
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE I CAN DO ...!
...ALL I CAN DO IS WAIT FOR WASHIO TO FINISH UP ...
GH...
SHIT...
北 北
IF I TSUMO, HIROYUKI WILL GO BELOW ZERO...
IT'S NO GOOD.
WILL BE WASHIO, WHO WILL TAKE FIRST PLACE ...!
AND WHEN HE DOES, THE ONE WITH THE MOST POINTS
.....

NO... EVEN IF HE DOESN'T TAKE THE TIME TO TSUMO.....
IT'LL BE ALL OVER IF HIROYUKI DEALS INTO HIS HAND THIS TURN .....
IF WASHIO GETS TSUMO NEXT, HIROYUKI WILL PROBABLY GO BELOW ZERO...!
WAIT...

WITH THE TWO OF THEM WORKING TOGETHER, IT'S A FACT THAT HIROYUKI IS TRYING TO PUSH WASHIO UP.
HE'LL PROBABLY DEAL INTO HIS HAND THIS TURN.
IT'D BE DANGEROUS TO AVOID HIM UNTIL HIROYUKI'S TURN...!
THIS IS BAD —!

HOW'D THIS HAPPEN TO ME.....!
IN SHORT, IF I DON'T DEAL INTO WASHIO'S HAND BEFORE HE DOES
IT'S VERY LIKELY THAT WASHIO WILL FINISH THE GAME IN FIRST PLACE...!
BY THE TIME WEST REALIZED WHAT WAS GOING ON THEY WERE ALREADY IN THE WORST POSSIBLE SITUATION.....
YES...
SPREAD DOWN TO THE ROOTS OF WEST!
EAST'S POISON HAD ALREADY
IT WAS A SITUATION WHERE HE HAD TO DEAL INTO AN OPPONENT IN RICHI ON PURPOSE.
IT WASN'T EVEN OVERLOOKING THE HANEMAN...
IT WAS ALL TOO LATE .....!

AND NOW THE ROOTS WERE INCHES FROM ROTTING AWAY TOO...!

CHAPTER 59
WEST'S
COUNTERSTRIKE

IT DEVELOPED IN AN UNEXPECTED WAY, ACCORDING TO HIROYUKI'S PLAN.
FINAL BATTLE OF THE EAST-WEST QUALIFYING ROUNDS

AND HIROYUKI WAS AT 2800.
NANGOU AND OGAMI, 22800.
WASHIO HAD 51600 POINTS
IN THE EAST 1ST ROUND DEALER'S FOURTH ROUND,

WASHIO WOULD AUTOMATICALLY TAKE FIRST
IF HE WON, HIROYUKI WOULD GO BELOW ZERO.
HE COULDN'T WIN...
NANGOU COULD HAVE GOTTEN TSUMO FOR HIS HANEMAN THIS ROUND BUT...
四萬
五萬
六萬
七萬
八萬
中

DEALT INTO WASHIO'S HAND, IT WOULD BE ALL OVER.
IF HIROYUKI'S DISCARD THIS TURN
BECAUSE HIROYUKI WAS INTENTIONALLY TRYING TO PUSH WASHIO UP, THE CHANCES OF THAT HAPPENING WERE INCREDIBLY HIGH.
WHAT COULD HE DO .....?
HE COULDN'T LET THAT HAPPEN...
AND FURTHERMORE, HE WOULD HAVE TO DEAL INTO WASHIO'S HAND ON PURPOSE. THE WORST POSSIBLE SITUATION
HE HAD TO GIVE UP ON WINNING WITH THIS HANEMAN
TO AVOID THAT
EVEN SAYING I'M GOING TO DEAL INTO WASHIO'S HAND
AND .....
THIS IS THE DUMBEST THING EVER...
SHIT....
.....

FROM LOOKING AT HIS DISCARDS
THIS COULD BE HARD, TOO...

OGAMI IS MY LAST RESORT
IT'S PROBABLY HOPELESS
I'LL HAVE TO DO WHAT I CAN, BUT
AND ALL I'VE GOT IN MY HAND ARE MANZU.
I DON'T GET THE FEELING HE'S HOLDING ANY MANZU.....

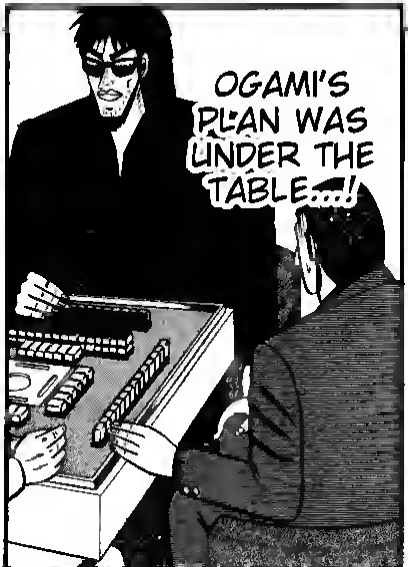
.....

THAT FEELING THAT FILLED OGAMI...
HE COULD FIGURE OUT WHAT HE FELT IN AN INSTANT...!
NANGOU WAS A VETERAN PLAYER
URGH...

HE'S GOT SOME KIND OF PLAN IN MIND...
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT...

OGAMI HAD A SECRET PLAN TO TURN THE TIDE...!
HE HAD THE EYES OF A MAN DETERMINED TO WIN...!

WHAT COULD IT BE...?
BUT A PLAN TO GET US OUT OF THIS CORNER WE'RE IN...


OGAMI'S PLAN WAS UNDER THE TABLE...!

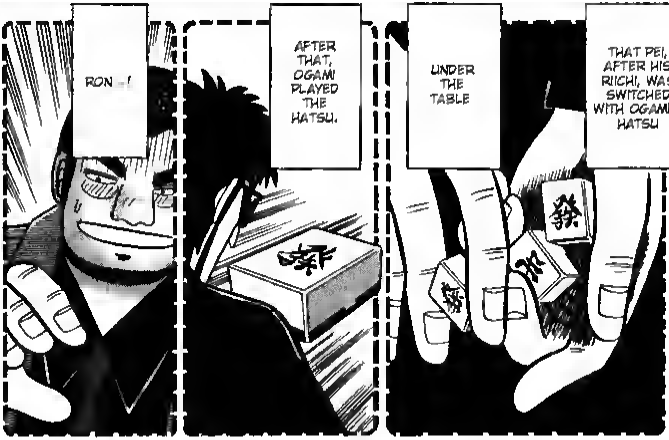
STRET-
CHED
UNDER
THE
TABLE
OGAMI'S
HAND
HELD
TWO
HATSU
...!

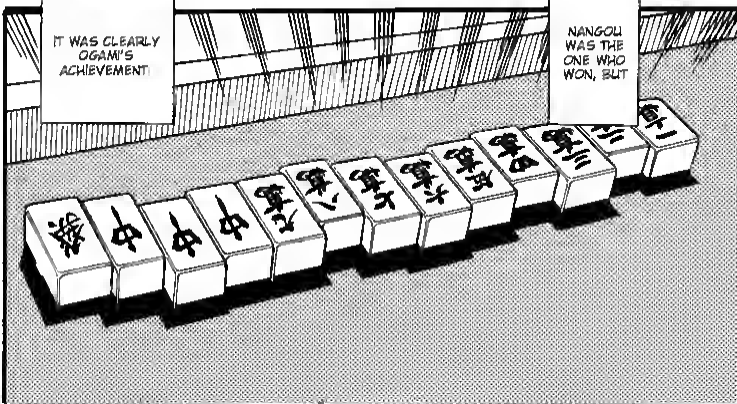
THE MOMENT NANGOU SAW THOSE HATSU
HE UNDERSTOOD EVERYTHING OGAMI WAS GOING FOR.
HE HELD OFF ON DISCARDING THE 5-MAN
AND PLAYED THE PEI...!
RIICHI!

NANGOU WENT FOR A FURITEN RICHI ON THE PEI, A SINGLE WAIT.....!
一萬 二萬 三萬 四萬 五萬 六萬 七萬 八萬 九萬 中 中 中 北
OGAMI!
THE NEXT INSTANT ...
カチャラ
THE DISCARD OF THE HATSU THAT WAS WEST'S SIGNAL TO LAUNCH A COUNTERSTRIKE .....!
DISCARDED HATSU .....!

RON...!
ざわ..
ざわ
THEY HAD SWITCHED TILES...!
WEST'S SETUP WAS SIMPLE AND OBVIOUS
YES.
URGH...!
CLOSED HON-ITSU, CHUN, ITSU .....
RIICHI, IPPATSU ...!
BAI-MAN .....!

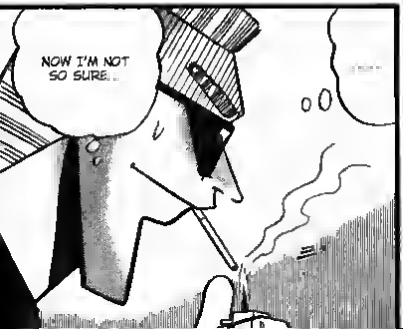
NANGOU HAD BEEN IN FURITEN WITH A SINGLE WAIT ON THE PEI...!





IT WAS OGAMI'S SHARP WITS THAT PUSHED THEM OUT OF THE RING.....!
EAST SIDE ALMOST HAD VICTORY IN THEIR GRASP.....

HEH HEH...
.....

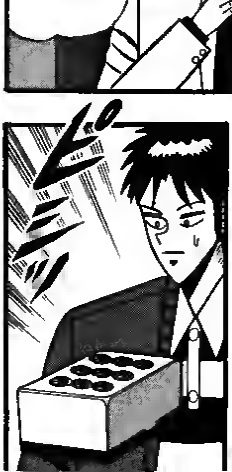

NOW I'M NOT SO SURE...

A FINE PLAY THAT SAVED THEM FROM DEFEAT
さわ
さわ

WASHIO: 50600
THE DIFFERENCE WAS 9900 .....!
NANGOU: 40700

NANGOU'S QUICKLY CAUGHT UP WITH WASHIO.
NOW THAT OGAMI DEALT INTO HIS HAND

HE CAN GET ONE-AND-A-HALF TIMES THE POINTS
AND IN ADDITION, THE DEALER FOR THE EAST 2ND ROUND IS NANGOU.



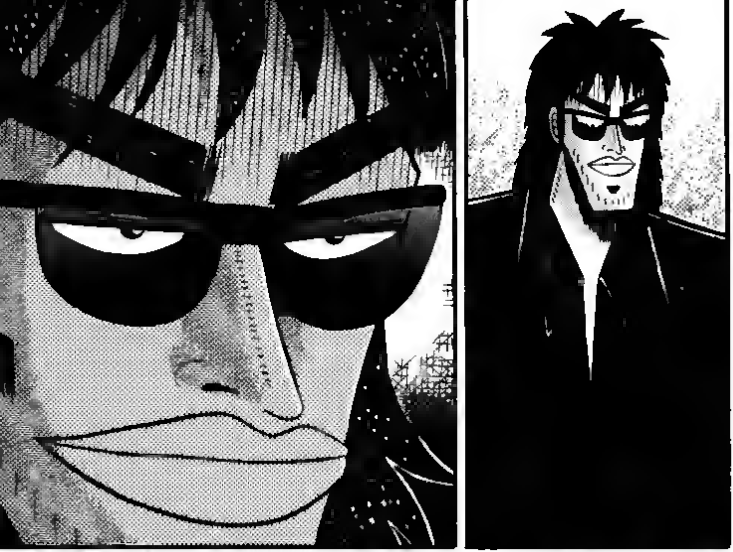
IF HE DEALS INTO EVEN A MANGAN HAND, NOW NANGOU WILL TAKE FIRST PLACE
HIROYUKI CAN'T PLAY AROUND LIKE HE'S BEEN UP UNTIL NOW EITHER.
HE'LL HAVE TO STEP LIGHTLY.....

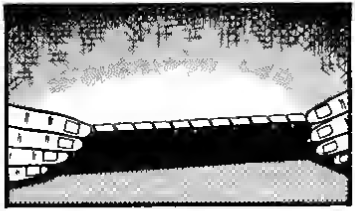
HIROYUKI DID A GOOD JOB SO FAR.
DEALING INTO MY DEALER MANGAN FOR 8000 AT THE START
AND DISCARDING DANGEROUS TILES AHEAD OF ME LIKE HE DID EARLIER
IT'S CLEAR HE'S TRYING TO PUSH ME UP INTO THE SHOWDOWN
THIS EAST 2ND ROUND TOO

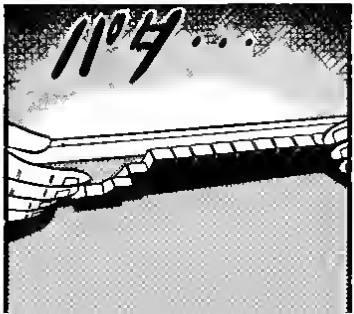
HE'S BEING CONSCIOUS OF NANGOU'S DISCARDS
HIS AIM IS CLEAR
NOT LETTING NANGOU CALL WHEN HIS DISCARDS POINT TO A HON-ITSU HAND...
HE'S PROBABLY NOT EVEN PUTTING TOGETHER A HAND...!
HIROYUKI IS INTENTIONALLY MATCHING WHAT HE PLAYS
I HAVE TO TAKE THE FINAL WIN WITH MY OWN ABILITIES...!
IT WON'T MEAN ANYTHING IF I CAN'T GET RESULTS AFTER HE'S BEEN GIVING ME COVER SO FAR...!

WASHIO:
IN TENPAI ON THE 9TH TURN
IF I RICHI WITH THE 6-PIN I'LL BE READY TO GO OUT..!
TAN-YAO, PIN-FU, SAN-SHOKU ONE DORA...!
GOT IT...! AN IDEAL POSITION
EVEN TSUMO WILL PUT ME AT THE TOP...
WHEN IT'S HANEMAN
NANGOU'S PROBABLY FINE, BUT
WILL THIS 6-PIN GO THROUGH...?
THE PROBLEM IS OGAMI...!
.....BUT.....
チラ・・

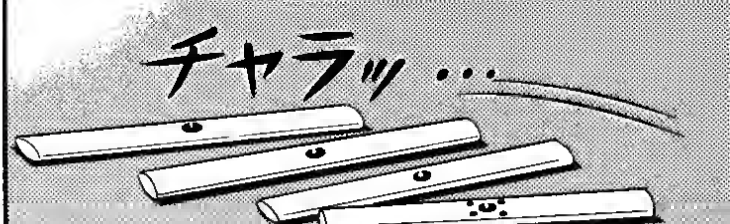
OGAMI'S DISCARDS
I CHOOSE TO GO FOR THE SAN-SHOKU ...!
THAT WILL GET RID OF MY PIN-FU SAN-SHOKU.
HE'S ALREADY GOT SOUZU OUT ON THE TABLE, SO THOSE WILL GO THROUGH, NO PROBLEM, BUT
EVEN IF IT'S A BIT RECKLESS HERE .....
GO THROUGH ...!






no4...

ドヤ.ドヤ.ドヤ...
RON...!
WHAT SHOULD I HAVE PULLED OUT HERE.....?
EVEN THOUGH IT WAS POINTING TOWARDS SAN-SHOKU
I WENT A BIT TOO FORCEFULLY
SHIT.....
DISCARD THE 7-SOU...
WITH THIS 8-PIN DISCARD.....!
HEH HEH...
URGH...
SHIT...
.....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ざわ…

AND BECAUSE NANGOU IS UNCHANGED AT 40700…
WASHIO DEALT INTO TAN-YAO, PIN-FU WITH 2 DORA.
NOW HE'S GOT 42600 POINTS
YEAH…
IT'S GETTING INTERESTING…

WILL THE WINNER BE NANGOU OR WASHIO...?
NOW I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.
ざわ..
ざわ..
NAAAH
WASHIO: 42600
THE POINT DIFFERENCE IS A MERE 1900...!
NANGOU: 40700

HE'LL CATCH UP IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE GAME.
RIGHT NOW, THE ONE WHO'S IN THE LEAD AS FAR AS HAVING THE FLOW OF THE GAME GOES IS OGAMI!

NOBODY EVEN CONSIDERED
AT THAT TIME
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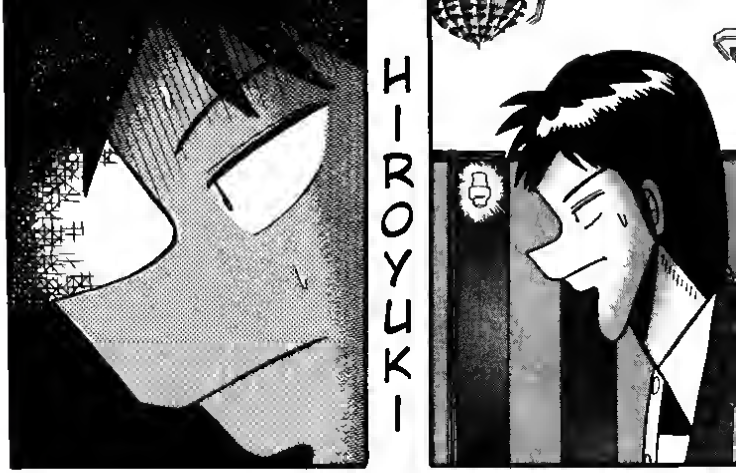
ざわ


HIROYUKI

NOBODY HAD REALIZED HOW TIGHTLY HE WAS HANGING ONTO IT FOR A COMEBACK...!
HIROYUKI HAD A SECRET PLAN

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CHAPTER 60
SENDING THE WINNING TILE

THE FINAL BATTLE OF THE EAST-WEST QUALIFYING ROUNDS
BY ACCEPTING HIROYUKI'S SUPPORT, WASHIO FLEW UP INTO THE LEAD.
AT ONE POINT, HE HAD AN OVERWHELMINGLY SUPERIOR POSITION, BUILDING UP A POINT DIFFERENCE OF 28600.

AT THIS TIME, THE POINTS OF THE FOUR PEOPLE WERE
WASHIO: 42600
NANGOU: 40700
OGAMI: 13900
HIROYUKI: 2800

BUT ENTERING THE EAST 3RD ROUND
THINGS TOOK A TURN FOR THE WORSE

AND THE ONE WHO WON
WOULD COME IN FIRST.

NANGOU OR WASHIO
WHICHEVER ONE OF THEM WAS FIRST TO TSUMO WITH A HANEMAN
HIROYUKI WOULD GO BELOW ZERO.

EAST 3RD ROUND, 6TH TURN
SHIT...
WAS IT AN ECHO OF THE PREVIOUS ROUND WHERE HE DEALT RATHER HEAVILY INTO ANOTHER PERSON'S HAND.....?
AFTER GETTING THIS FAR, WASHIO COULDN'T GET HIS HAND TOGETHER.
HIS HAND WAS MAKING STEADY PROGRESS
IT SEEMED LIKE THINGS WERE GOING WELL FOR NANGOU.
ON THE OTHER HAND

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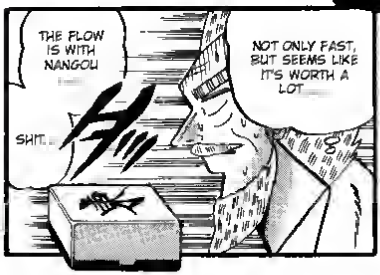

THE FLOW IS WITH NANGOU
NOT ONLY FAST, BUT SEEMS LIKE IT'S WORTH A LOT
SHIT..

AFTER THAT, HE PLAYED A SERIES OF MIDDLE TILES.
HE WAS QUICK TO GET RID OF HIS FANPAI TILES.
IT'S A FAST HAND .....

HIROYUKI SAVED HIM FROM HIS BAD FLOW.
BUT ONCE AGAIN

PON...!

TSUMO ...!
NEXT TURN
HE BROUGHT HIS POINTS BACK UP TO 8000
AND ESCAPED THE SITUATION WHERE HE WOULD IMMEDIATELY DROP BELOW ZERO IF ANYONE GOT TSUMO
TON, 2 DORA, A WIN FOR 5200 POINTS
AND THEN IN THE LAST ROUND
IT WAS CHAOS WITH PLAYERS GETTING TSUMO ON SMALL HANDS
AFTER THAT

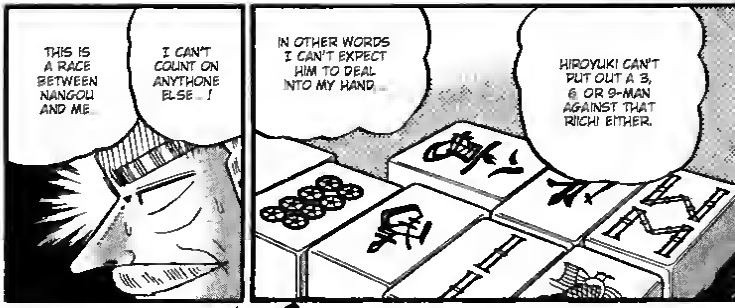
SOUTH 4TH ROUND, LAST ROUND...!
AT THIS TIME STILL IN THE LEAD, WASHIO
WITH 37000 POINTS.
FOLLOWING HIM IN SECOND PLACE WAS NANGOU WITH 29500 POINTS.
THIRD WAS OGAMI WITH 21600.
IF NANGOU IN 2ND COULD GET A MANGAN HAND, IT WOULD BE AN UNCONDITIONAL COMEBACK.
AND IT WOULD BE A COMEBACK IF OGAMI IN 3RD WON A MANGAN WITH A DIRECT HIT ON WASHIO
IT WAS A DELICATE SITUATION.
ONLY ONE PERSON WAS OUT OF THE PICTURE HIROYUKI
HE HAD 11900 POINTS.
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIM AND WASHIO IN THE LEAD WAS 25100.
A PAINFULLY HUGE DIFFERENCE——!
BUT IT HADN'T FELT LIKE HE WAS GOING TO WIN FROM THE BEGINNING.
RATHER THAN GOING ON ABOUT THE POINT DIFFERENCE, THERE'D NEVER BEEN A SIGN HE WAS GOING AFTER IT.
THIS HAN-CHAN, HE KEPT DILIGENTLY COVERING FOR WASHIO
THAT'S WHAT EVERYONE WAS THINKING——

BUT
THE DORA IS 4-SOU
IT CHANGED...!
IN ONLY THIS ROUND
NOBODY HAD NOTICED THIS CHANGE YET
IF I WIN, I'LL COME IN FIRST
IF I WIN...
NO. THERE REALLY WASN'T ANYTHING TO NOTICE...

PON...!
EVERYONE WAS DESPERATE FOR THAT FINAL WIN.
I'M READY...!

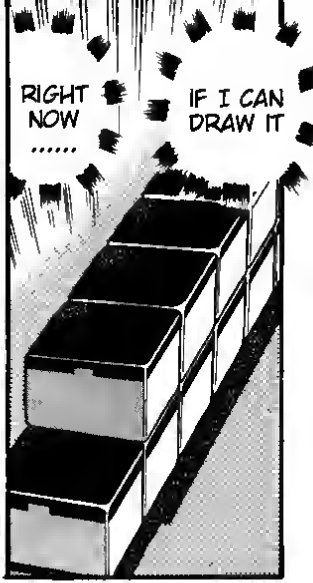
WASHIO'S TENPAI, WAITING ON 3-MAN, 6-MAN, OR 9-MAN.
URGH
IT'S A FIGHT TO THE FINISH HERE.
CAN I TSUMO WITH THIS?
IF HIROYUKI WILL DEAL IN FOR ME HERE I'LL WIN!
RIICHI ...!
SHIT
IT'S TO MAKE SURE IT'S A MANGAN HAND...
RIICHI ON THIS ROUND MEANS
GOING FOR DORA AND TSUMO, TAN-YAO, PIN-FU? .....
.....THAT BASTARD WENT FOR IT.....!

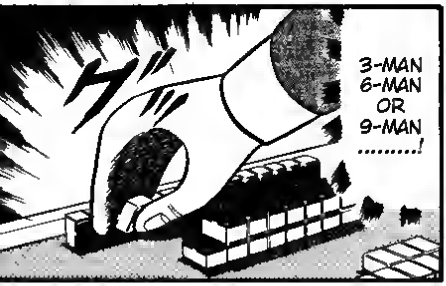
WE ENDED UP BEING READY TO GO OUT IN THE SAME TIME.
HE NEEDED TO MAKE HIS HAND GO UP TO MANGAN.
EVEN THOUGH WE COULD WIN WITH 1000 POINTS OR WHATEVER
HE'S ALL SET...


THIS IS A RACE BETWEEN NANGOU AND ME...
I CAN'T COUNT ON ANYTHONE ELSE...!
IN OTHER WORDS I CAN'T EXPECT HIM TO DEAL INTO MY HAND...
HIROYUKI CAN'T PUT OUT A 3, 6 OR 9-MAN AGAINST THAT RICHI EITHER.

GRGH...
Ooo
AS IF EITHER OF US WOULD DEAL INTO THE OTHER'S HAND...
IT'S A RACE TO TSUMO ON YOUR OWN...!

IT WON'T BE A PROBLEM!


RIGHT NOW .....
IF I CAN DRAW IT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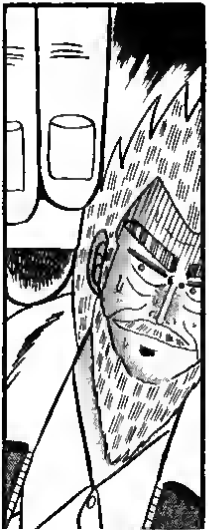
3-MAN 6-MAN OR 9-MAN .....!

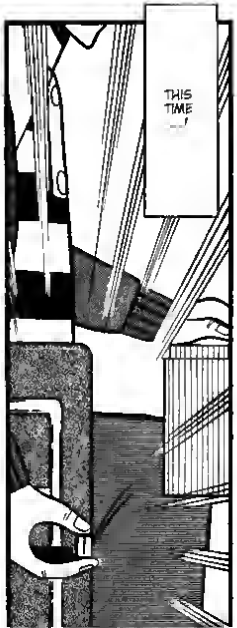
THIS TIME, WASHIO'S LUCK RAN OUT...!

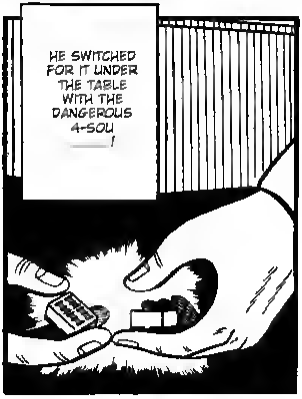
AT THIS POINT ...!


BUT

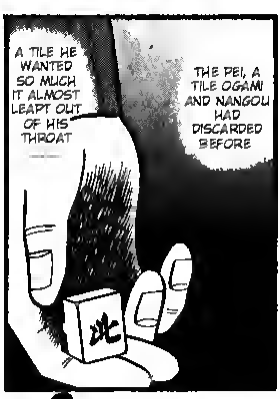
THE DORA, 4-SOU .....!
THE DORA ISN'T JUST RISKY AGAINST NANGOU
IT'S 4-SO BAD AGAINST OGAMI TOO.
A TILE OF DEATH .....
THE WORST DRAW HE COULD HAVE MADE, FORETELLING HIS DEATH .....
NORMALLY, I'D JUST DISCARD SOMETHING ELSE, BUT .....
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THAT IN THE FINAL STAGE OF THE GAME HERE.
WHAT DO I DO.....?

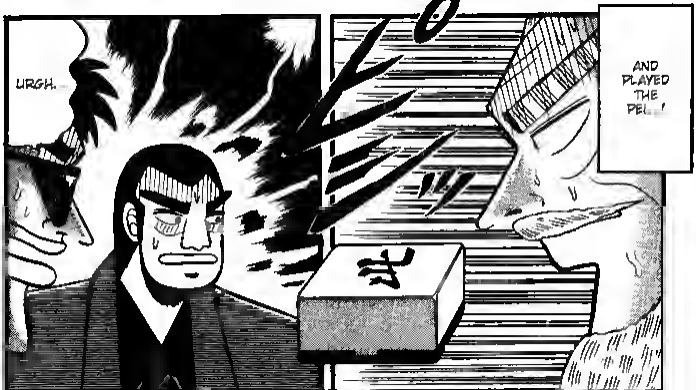
HIROYUKI'S HAND STRETCHED UNDER THE TABLE



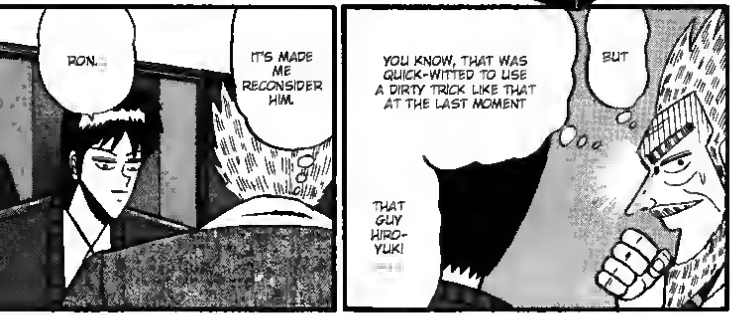


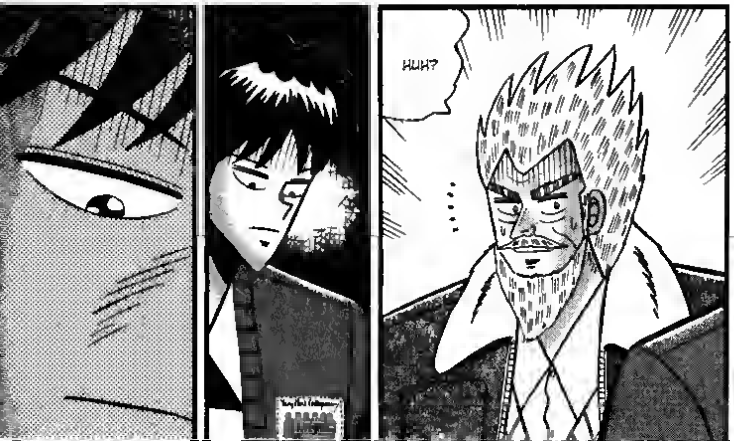
THERE WAS NO TIME TO LOSE……!





YOU GUYS MADE A SWITCH IN THE EAST 1ST ROUND TOO
THERE'S NOT GOING TO BE A PROBLEM.
HEH HEH


RON.
IT'S MADE ME RECONSIDER HIM.
YOU KNOW, THAT WAS QUICK-WITTED TO USE A DIRTY TRICK LIKE THAT AT THE LAST MOMENT
BUT
THAT GUY HIRO-YUKI


HUH?

Young Man's Conspiracy

THIS KAIN-CHAIN
FOR THE FIRST TIME

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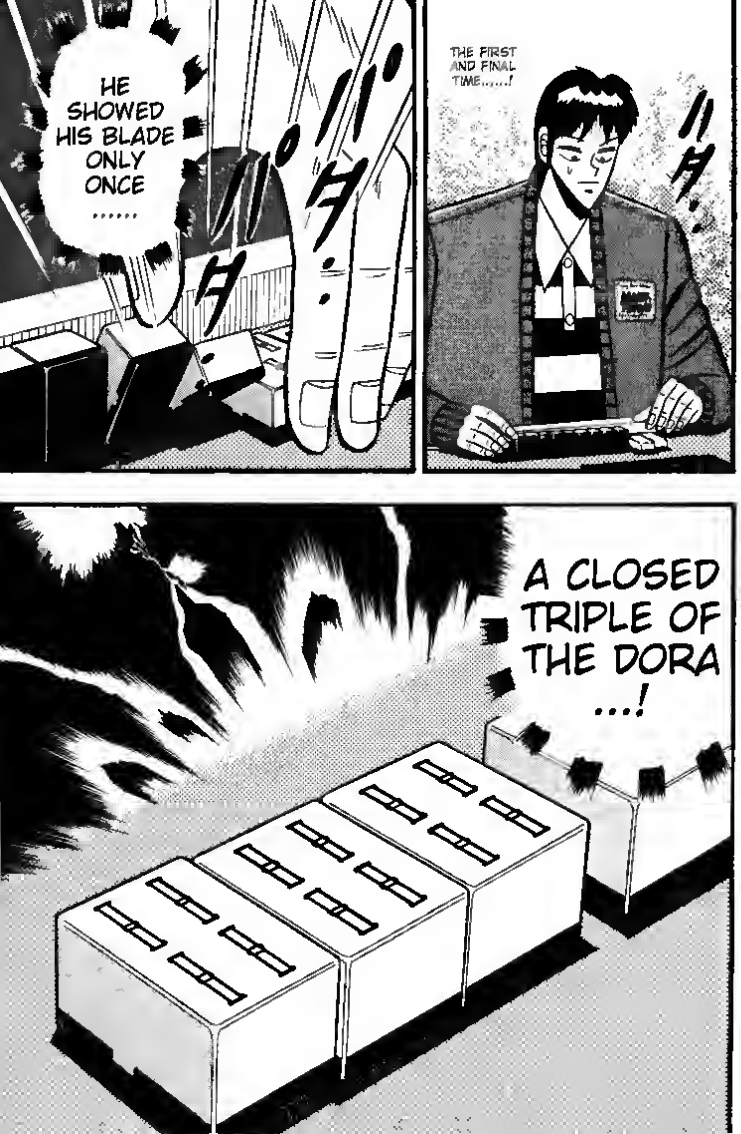
WHAT ―?


HE SHOWED HIS BLADE ONLY ONCE .....
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THE FIRST AND FINAL TIME.....!
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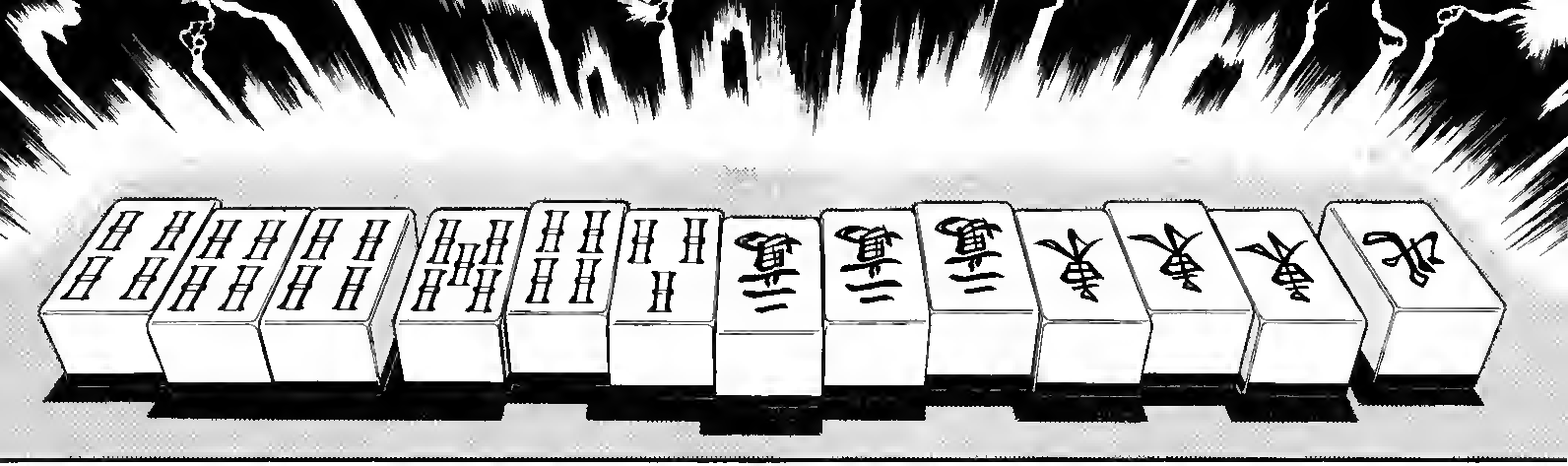
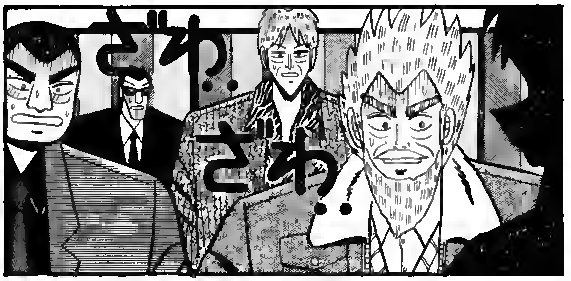
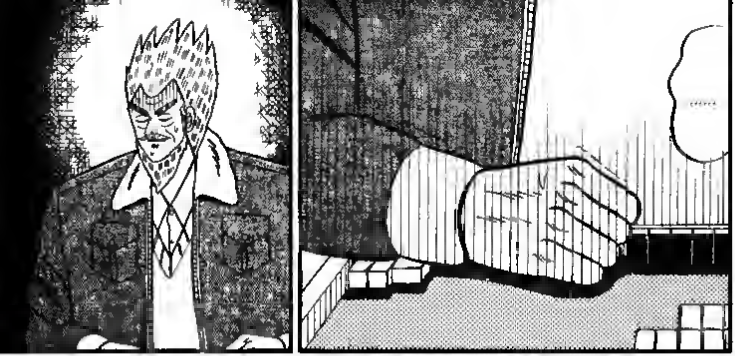
A CLOSED TRIPLE OF THE DORA ...!





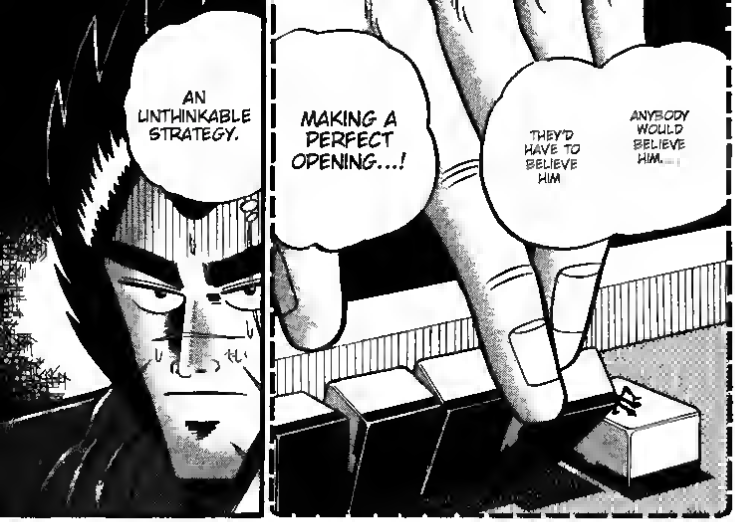
TON. 4 DORA, SAN-AN-KOU ...!

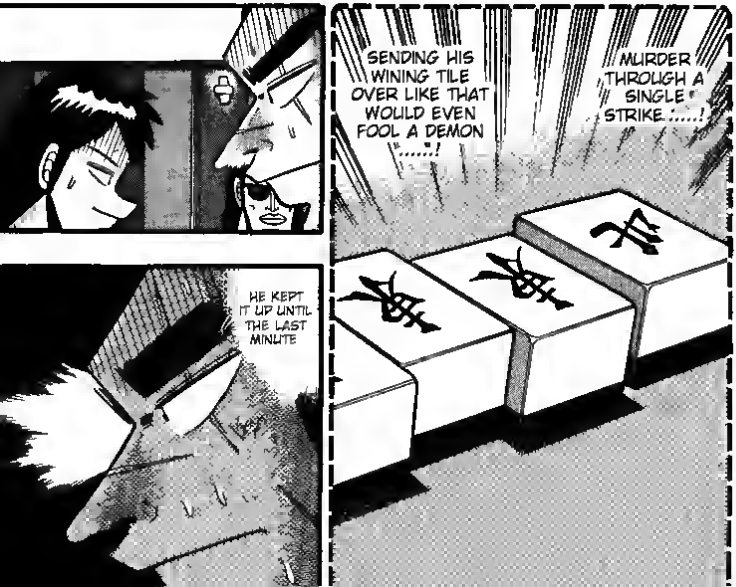

.....

HE WENT AND DID THAT.....
THAT BASTARD HIROYUKI
.....

WAS HIRO'S PLAN.
THIS COMEBACK SETUP
WAS THE TILE HIROYUKI GAVE TO HIM RIGHT BEFORE THAT.
THE PEI THAT WASHIO DEALT INTO HIS HAND WITH

THAT TRICK THAT HE SHOWED US ALL HERE WAS A SURPRISE ATTACK BY SENDING OVER HIS WINNING TILE.....
BREAKING THROUGH AT A SINGLE POINT, KNOWING VERY WELL THAT HE WOULDN'T HAVE A CHANCE TO WIN AGAINST THE COMBINED STRENGTH OF THE OTHER PLAYERS HERE...
HE RISKED IT ALL ON A SINGLE, SHARP, AND DIRECT LINE
DISCARDING DANGEROUS TILES AHEAD OF HIM.
INTENTIONALLY DEALING IN TO WASHIO'S HANDS
THIS HAN-CHAN... HIROYUKI HAD BEEN SUPPORTING WASHIO ALL THE WAY THROUGH
NOBODY WOULD EVER SEE IT COMING
WHEN HE SENT OVER HIS WINNING TILE.
IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO SUSPECT ANYTHING...
AND AT THE FINAL STAGE
HIROYUKI HAD BEEN DEVOTED TO DOING THAT UP UNTIL NOW...
PEI


AN UNTHINKABLE STRATEGY.
MAKING A PERFECT OPENING...!
THEY'D HAVE TO BELIEVE HIM
ANYBODY WOULD BELIEVE HIM.


SENDING HIS WINING TILE OVER LIKE THAT WOULD EVEN FOOL A DEMON.....!
MURDER THROUGH A SINGLE STRIKE.....!
HE KEPT IT UP UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE

IGAWA HIROYUKI WAS GOING TO THE SHOWDOWN!
THE ONE FINAL SEAT LEFT.....!
Young Men's contemporary
Spark Heart / Ally Hour

CHAPTER 61
A GAMBLE

THE EAST-WEST BATTLE QUALIFYING ROUND

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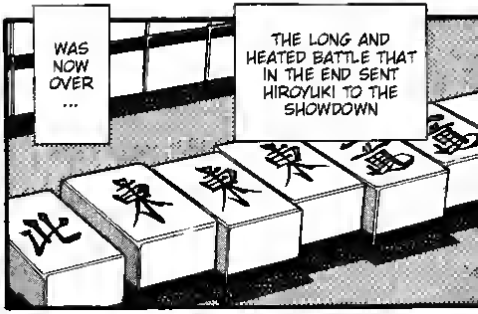

WAS NOW OVER ...
THE LONG AND HEATED BATTLE THAT IN THE END SENT HIROYUKI TO THE SHOWDOWN

6 WERE DROPPED IN THE QUALIFYING ROUND.
8 WERE LEFT.
FROM THE 14 ELITE BROUGHT TOGETHER FOR THE SHOWDOWN

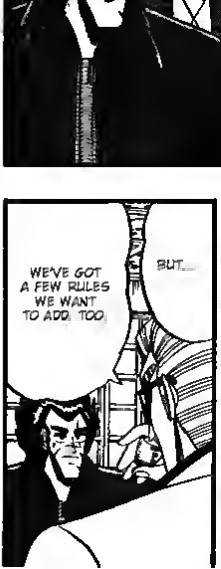
FOR WEST: HARADA, SOGA, MITSUI, AND AKUTSU.
FOR EAST: TEN, AKAGI, HIROYUKI, AND GINJI.
THAT IS ALL.
.....
.....
THESE 5 PEOPLE WILL GO ON TO THE SHOWDOWN
.....

TEN AND THE GANG DROVE OFF TOWARDS A RESTAURANT SPECIFIED BY HARADA
7 PM.
AFTER THE QUALIFYING ROUND WAS OVER, ONE NIGHT THREE DAYS LATER
MORE THAN GET AN ADVANTAGE IN THE SHOWDOWN...
IT'S TO GET A FAIR FIGHT OUT OF IT .....
.....
TONIGHT THE RULES OF THE SHOWDOWN AND HOW THE BATTLE WOULD BE FOUGHT WERE GOING TO BE DECIDED.

RULES THAT WOULD BE TO WEST'S ADVANTAGE, LIKE BUU-MAHJONG*
WE'LL WANT TO AVOID
THE MEETING TONIGHT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT.
WE WON'T BE ABLE TO REACH AN EASY COMPROMISE.

*BUU-MAHJONG: A KANSAI-AREA VARIANT WHERE ALL PLAYERS START WITH 2000 POINTS AND THE GAME CONTINUES UNTIL SOMEONE HAS REACHED 4000 POINTS OR SOMEONE GOES BELOW 0

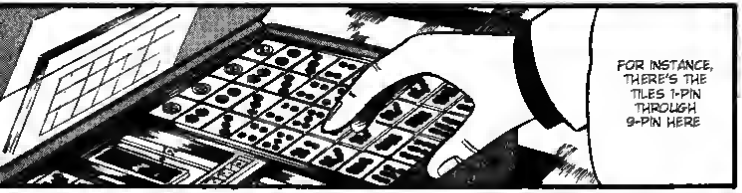
ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS AVOID THAT, NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES.
REPEATING A SERIES OF SHORT GAMES..
BUU-MAHJONG AND
THOSE ARE THE KINDS OF BATTLES WE DON'T WANT.
SOGA IS PARTICULARLY GOOD AT THAT KIND OF MAHJONG.
HARADA TOO...
WHILE ON THE OTHER HAND, GINJI AND HIROYUKI ARE TYPICALLY... BAD AT IT.

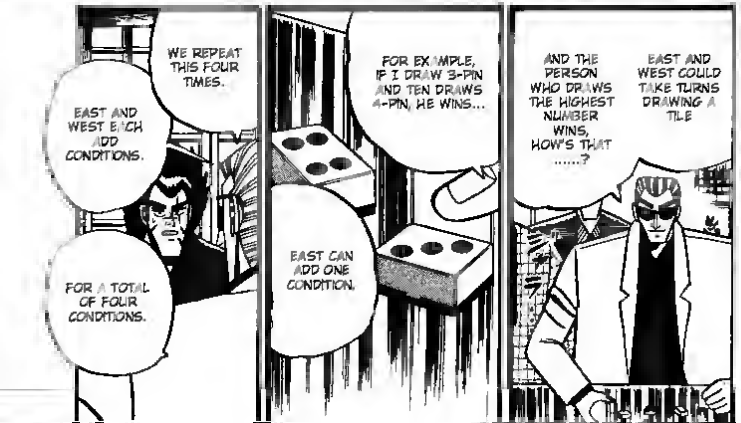

WE'VE GOT A FEW RULES WE WANT TO ADD, TOO.

BUT...

THE KANTOU RULES WE'VE BEEN USING SO FAR SHOULD BE GOOD, RIGHT?
SO... BASICALLY

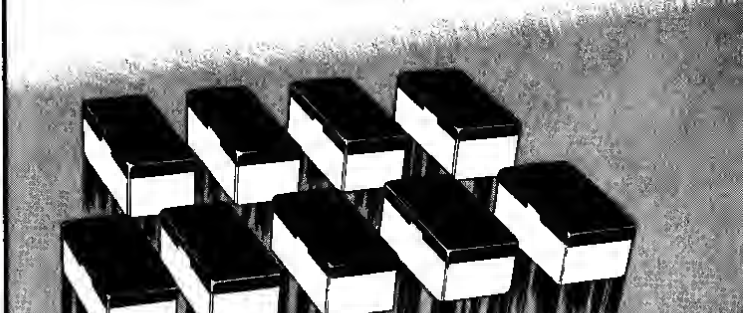
.....BIT OF A GAME?
SURE, ANYTHING WOULD DO.
WE COULD HAVE A BIT OF A GAME BETWEEN THE EIGHT PEOPLE LEFT IN THE SHOWDOWN
TO ADD FOUR CONDITIONS TO THE USUAL RULES.
HOW ABOUT IT...?
TEN...


FOR INSTANCE, THERE'S THE TILES 1-PIN THROUGH 9-PIN HERE


WE REPEAT THIS FOUR TIMES.
EAST AND WEST EACH ADD CONDITIONS.
FOR A TOTAL OF FOUR CONDITIONS.
FOR EXAMPLE, IF I DRAW 3-PIN AND TEN DRAWS 4-PIN, HE WINS...
EAST CAN ADD ONE CONDITION.
AND THE PERSON WHO DRAWS THE HIGHEST NUMBER WINS, HOW'S THAT .....?
EAST AND WEST COULD TAKE TURNS DRAWING A TILE

I BROUGHT ALONG THE PEOPLE FROM OUR SIDE THAT ARE GOING TO THE SHOWDOWN HERE TODAY.
SO THERE'S NO PROBLEM
YOU DON'T HAVE AKAGI WITH YOU BUT
IT'S A SIMPLE GAME
KEN SHOULD BE FINE IN HIS PLACE
WE'VE GOT ENOUGH FOR 4 VS 4.
HOW ABOUT IT...?
ざわ・・
CAN WE USE THE TILES WE BROUGHT...?
SURE.
I TRUST YOU.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
BASICALLY
IT'S NOT A BAD IDEA.
SINCE HARADA MADE A FAIR PROPOSAL...
AND SINCE WHICHEVER WAY RULES ARE ADDED ON
IT'LL MAKE THEIR PLAN OF ATTACK FOR THE SHOWDOWN CLEAR
THEN...
YEAH...
LET'S ACCEPT.
IT'S A GAMBLE .....!

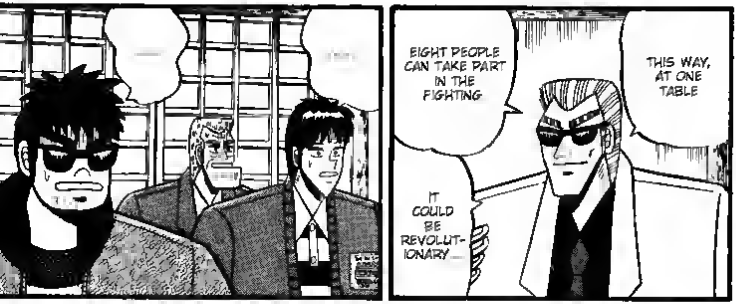


HARADA VS. KEN
1ST BATTLE.
A GAME OF FLIPPING THEM OVER.
TILES FROM 1-PIN TO 9-PIN

……
NOT BAD, NOT BAD.
7-PIN……
ス……

URGH
ARGH...!
HEH HEH
SORRY 'BOUT THAT
ALLOW ME TO PROPOSE A RULE
WE'LL DO THE FIRST ONE
THEN
TAG-TEAM MAHJONG.
IN PLAIN LANGUAGE
HUH—?
TEN-TURN SHIFTS...

AT THE VERY BEGINNING, EAST AND WEST EACH HAVE TWO PEOPLE AT THE TABLE.
AFTER TEN DISCARDS, THEY SWITCH OFF WITH ONE OF THEIR WAITING COMRADES
NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE HAND WILL ONLY BE PARTWAY COMPLETE
IN OTHER WORDS, THE BATTLE ADVANCES THROUGH THE COOPERATION OF TWO PEOPLE.


THIS WAY, AT ONE TABLE
EIGHT PEOPLE CAN TAKE PART IN THE FIGHTING
IT COULD BE REVOLUTIONARY—

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HIROYUKI GETS THE 1-PIN
SOGA GETS THE 5-PIN
2ND BATTLE
HEH HEH...
...GRGH
WEST WINS
NOW THEN .....
LET'S MAKE IT THAT YOU HAVE TO GET AT LEAST 8000 POINTS?
RULES WHERE IF IT'S LESS THAN THAT, ALL THAT HAPPENS IS THE WINDS SHIFT.
IT'S NICE FOR US OLD FOLKS...
THIS WAY THERE'S NO NEED TO CALCULATE POINTS.

GINJI
AKUTSU GETS THE 6-PIN.
3RD BATTLE.
HEH HEH...
URGH..!
GETS THE 3-PIN..!
.....
LET'S ADD A RULE WHERE IT RUNS FOR AN UNLIMITED AMOUNT OF TIME AND THOSE WHO DROP BELOW ZERO ARE ELIMINATED.
ONE HAN-CHAN WOULD BE TOO SHORT OF A TIME WITH THE TAG-TEAM PLAY.
.....
.....WHAT DO YOU THINK, HARADA .....?
THREE TIMES FOR WEST .....!
WELL.

ざわ…
……
ざわ…
URGH…!
4TH BATTLE
WEST GETS THE 4-PIN
THE TILES LEFT ARE
2-PIN AND 9-PIN
TEN…!
AT LEAST
WE HAVE TO GET AT LEAST ONE
IF IT KEEPS GOING LIKE THIS, WEST WILL GET EVERYTHING GOING THE WAY THEY WANT IT TO

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HE DID IT.....!
HE MANAGED TO SCORE A HIT ON THEM.....
NOW WE GET TO ADD A RULE TOO...!

IT'S ALL RESTING ON TEN'S IDEAS NOW
WHAT KIND OF A RULE WILL HE PROPOSE TO MAKE WEST STRUGGLE...?

.....
THEIR GOAL WITH THAT RULE IS OBVIOUS.
FIRST, THE TEN-TURN SHIFTS...
THE THREE RULES PROPOSED BY WEST SO FAR...
A STRATEGY TO USE EAST'S WEAK POINT TO ITS MAXIMUM.
THIS PLAN KEEPS HIROYUKI TIED INTO THE BATTLE...
IT'S CLEAR ONE PERSON'S MAHJONG ABILITY ISN'T AS GOOD, HIROYUKI.
OUT OF THE EIGHT PEOPLE HERE FOR THE SHOWDOWN

IT'S REASONABLE TO SAY THAT THEIR GOAL IS TO MAKE IT SO THAT THE ACTUALLY STRONG ONES WIN
IT SEEMS LIKE THE PLAN IS TO GET RID OF UNCERTAIN FACTORS AND ACCIDENTS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE
A STRATEGY THAT COMES FROM SELF-CONFIDENCE THAT THEIR SIDE WILL WIN UNDER THEIR OWN POWER
THE "8000-POINT RESTRICTION" AND "UNTIL POINTS RUN OUT" RULES ARE
CASTRATING THE RULES BY CUTTING OFF THAT POSSIBILITY MAKES IT BORING AS HELL...!
THE REASON A GAMBLE IS A GAMBLE IS THE CHANCE FOR A COMEBACK...!
LIKE I'D LET THEM GET AWAY WITH THAT...!
.....
.....

HOW ABOUT, YOU CAN'T LET YOUR VICTORIES PILE UP...?
HARADA .....
...
THEY'LL BE PUT INTO A CENTRAL COLLECTION OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT!!
WHETHER IT'S TSUMO OR SOMEONE DEALS INTO A HAND, THE POINT COUNTERS WILL DECREASE, BUT...
HUH...?
GIVING US SOMEHOW, SOMETIME, A CHANCE AT A ONE-SHOT COMEBACK!
BUT AT THE SAME TIME, IT'S HARD ON THE STRONG, BECAUSE NO MATTER HOW MUCH THEY WIN, THERE WILL NEVER BE A SAFETY NET FOR THEM TO FALL BACK ON...
THIS RULE IS HARD ON THE WEAK...
THE POINTS OF THE WINNERS WILL NEVER INCREASE...

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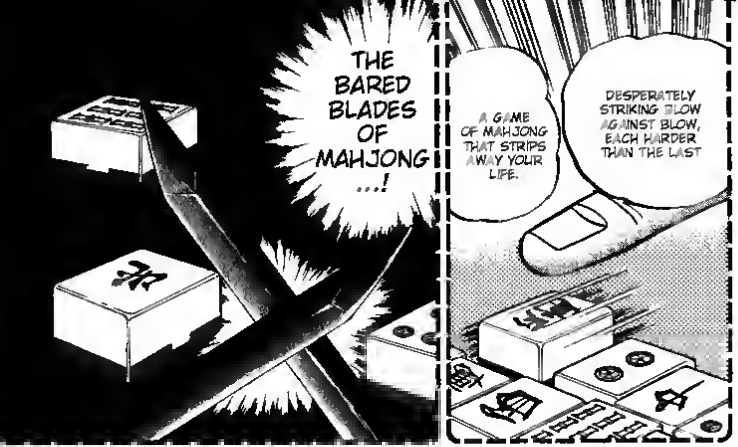
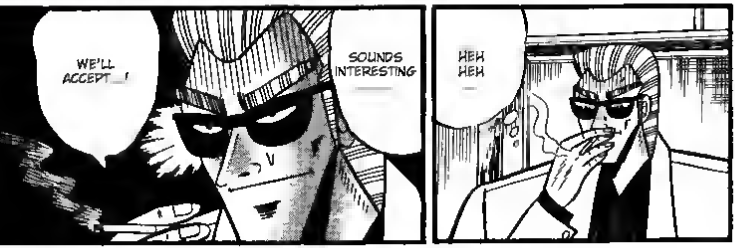
THIS RULE WILL HAVE OUR OPPONENTS' NECKS ON THE LINE BUT OURS WILL BE ON THE LINE AT THE SAME TIME TOO...
THIS IDEA WILL HAVE US STABBING EACH OTHER TO DEATH...!

TEN...

IT IMMEDIATELY TURNS INTO A COUNTDOWN TOWARDS DEATH.....
WHEN YOU DEAL IN.....

LOST POINTS CAN'T BE REGAINED
"NOT LETTING VICTORIES PILE UP" MEANS

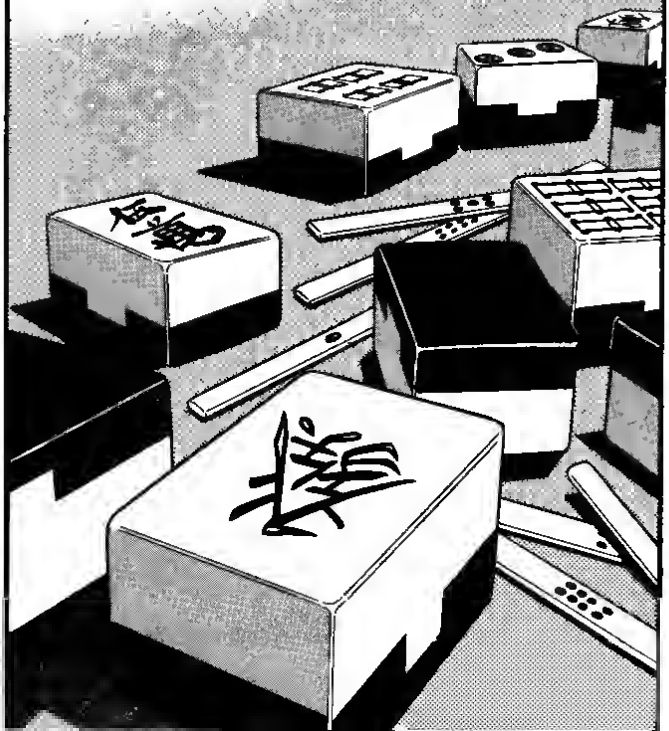

THE BARED BLADES OF MAHJONG ...!
A GAME OF MAHJONG THAT STRIPS AWAY YOUR LIFE.
DESPERATELY STRIKING BLOW AGAINST BLOW, EACH HARDER THAN THE LAST


WE'LL ACCEPT...!
SOUNDS INTERESTING
HEH HEH

THERE'S NO HOPE...
IN THIS GAME

ONLY FEAR AND MURDEROUS INTENT

SLOWLY SIMMERING UNTIL THEY BECOME THICK IN THE AIR.....!

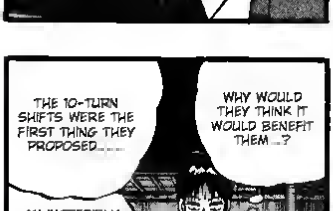


CHAPTER 62
SWIM

THE SHOWDOWN OF THE EAST-WEST BATTLE.

THE TEN-TURN SHIFT RULE.
THE MOST BIZARRE RULE
AND THEN
THEY WOULD BE PLAYING BY IRREGULAR RULES IN THIS BATTLE.
• MANGAN LIMITATION
• NO TIME LIMIT
• CANNOT PILE UP VICTORIES. THE LAW OF POINT DECREASE.

WOULD TAKE PLACE TONIGHT AT THE RESTAURANT "KIKUMURA"
THE BATTLE TO DECIDE WHO WOULD COME OUT ON TOP
料亭
菊村
THE WINNERS OF THE INTENSE QUALIFYING ROUNDS...!
THERE WERE EIGHT GAMBLERS FROM EAST AND WEST REMAINING


WHY WOULD THEY THINK IT WOULD BENEFIT THEM...?
THE 10-TURN SHIFTS WERE THE FIRST THING THEY PROPOSED...
AN INCREDIBLY IRREGULAR GAME WHERE 8 PEOPLE FIGHT AT THE SAME TIME.

WOULD THESE ODD RULES BRING LUCK TO EAST OR WEST ...?

FOR THE SIDE THAT HAS A "HOLE" IN THE EIGHT PEOPLE GATHERED AROUND THE TABLE
THIS RULE WILL DRIVE THEM INTO A PAINFULLY DEBILITATING SITUATION

OR CONVERSELY, THE "HOLE" WILL PLAY QUICKLY IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE GAME AND
FALL BEHIND A STEP OR TWO...
FOR INSTANCE, IN A GAME THAT THE GENIUS AKAGI SHIGERU HAS WRAPPED UP
THE "HOLE" WHO TAKES OVER FROM HIM WILL MESS IT UP.
NATURALLY, TAKING OVER FOR THAT
TEN OR AKAGI WON'T BE ABLE TO USE THEIR ABILITIES EFFECTIVELY.
AND FROM WEST'S POINT OF VIEW, THAT "HOLE" IS
IT'S TO MAKE IT SO THAT IT INCONVENIENCES THE WHOLE TEAM.
SIMPLY PUT, IT'S NOT JUST TO BRING THAT "HOLE" DOWN.....
SHIT...!
IT CAN ONLY BE ME...
ME...

I'M READY TO TAKE THEM ON!

RIGHT NOW... YOU'RE PROBABLY THINKING OF GIVING IT ALL YOU'VE GOT.
HUH ..?
JUST DO IT...!
AKAGI .....
IT'S WEST'S STRATEGY
THAT THOUGHT IS WHAT YOU'RE ALREADY TRAPPED BY.
THAT'S WHAT'S BEING TESTED.
JUST... PLAY LIKE YOU ALWAYS DO.
?
ISN'T YOUR DETERMINATION TO WIN...
WHAT'S BEING TESTING RIGHT NOW
THAT KIND OF THING ONLY GETS IN THE WAY.

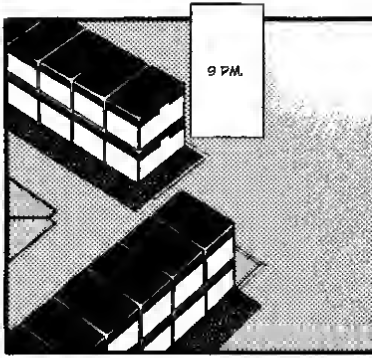
YOUR PRESENCE OF MIND ...!
DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF YOURSELF

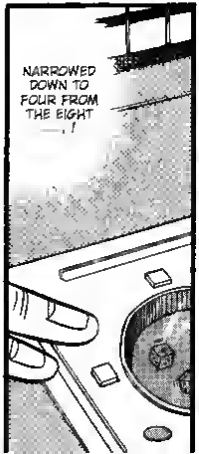
PRESENCE OF MIND...?

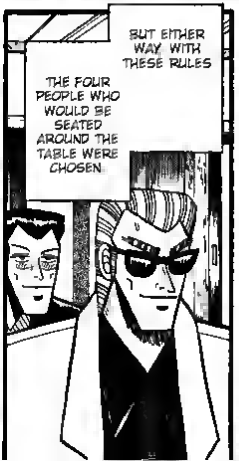
TONIGHT, HIROYUKI COULD ONLY FEEL IT WAS DEEPLY SIGNIFICANT,
BUT... AT THIS TIME, HIROYUKI STILL HADN'T REALIZED IT.
IN THE MIDST OF THIS TUMULTUOUS BATTLE, IT WAS IN FACT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING...
YES.

AND THEN

THE SHOWDOWN OF THE EAST-WEST BATTLE BEGAN QUIETLY.
WITH THOSE WHO WERE OUT OF THE RUNNING, KEN AND KANAMITSU, KEEPING WATCH

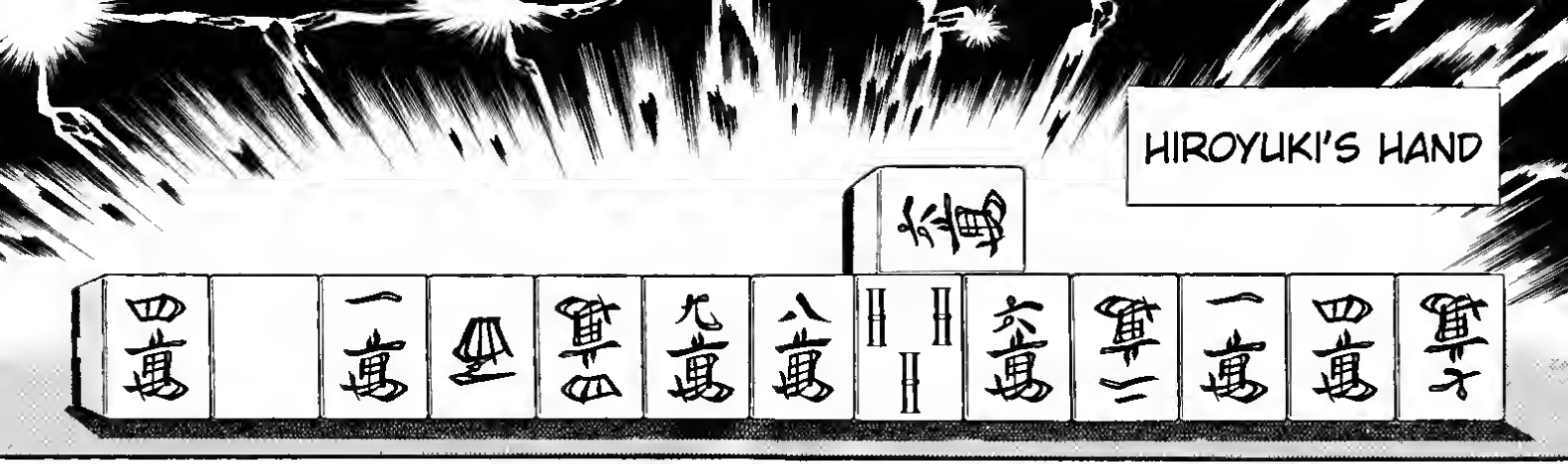

9 P.M.

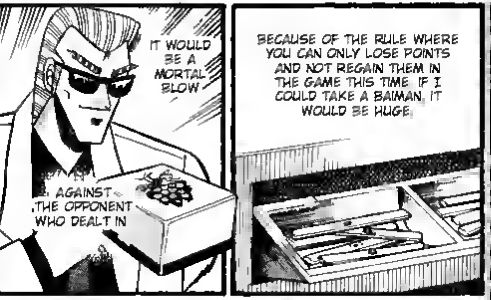

NARROWED DOWN TO FOUR FROM THE EIGHT——!


BUT EITHER WAY WITH THESE RULES
THE FOUR PEOPLE WHO WOULD BE SEATED AROUND THE TABLE WERE CHOSEN.

THE STRANGE RULES
NOBODY KNEW HOW THE MATCH WOULD TURN OUT

DEALER WAS TEN.
HIROYUKI WAS NORTH.
HIS FIRST STARTING HAND
HIROYUKI STARTED.
EAST 1ST ROUND. AKAGI WAS BEHIND HIM.
FIRST DRAW
COULD IT BE...
LOTS OF MANZU...
URGH


HIROYUKI'S HAND

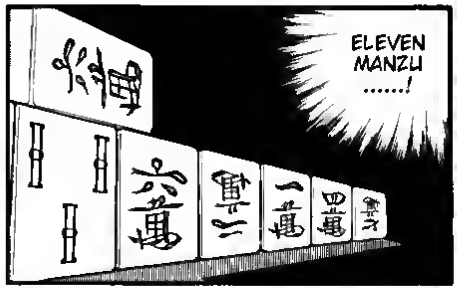

IT WOULD BE A MORTAL BLOW
AGAINST THE OPPONENT WHO DEALT IN

BECAUSE OF THE RULE WHERE YOU CAN ONLY LOSE POINTS AND NOT REGAIN THEM IN THE GAME THIS TIME. IF I COULD TAKE A BAIMAN, IT WOULD BE HUGE.

JUST WITH CLOSED CHIN-ITSU, IT WOULD BE HANEMAN, AND IF I COULD GET IT DOWN TO ITSUU TOO, IT COULD GO AS FAR AS BAIMAN.

WITH TWO NON-DEALERS FROM WEST. THAT'S 2 X 4000 = 8000 POINTS LOSSES FOR EAST AND WEST WOULD BE ABOUT THE SAME
I'LL HAVE TO DO SOMETHING, I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT.

BECAUSE THE DEALER IS TEN... HE'D GO DOWN 8000 POINTS.
BUT IT'S MEANINGLESS TO TSUMO FOR THIS HAND.


ELEVEN MANZU .....!

THIS IS A CRAZY HAND...!

ドキ…
ドキ…
……

I CAN'T WIN BY ANYTHING EXCEPT RON FOR THIS HAND.....!

WITHOUT STANDING OUT
CARE-FULLY
QUIETLY

NONE OF THESE PLAYERS WILL LET GO OF ANY MANZU
IF THEY EVEN GET A HINT THAT THIS HAND IS CHIN-ITSU

スッ..

CHIN-ITSU WAITING ON 7-MAN OR 8-MAN
TENPAI ON THE 8TH TURN

THAT WAS HOW HIROYUKI'S THOUGHTS RAN.
HIS DRAWS WENT WELL

JUST REARRANGE NATURALLY, BIT BY BIT
DON'T HURRY TO ORGANIZE THE TILES

SO FAR, IT WAS IDEAL...!
HE'D ERASED THE SCENT OF CHIN-ITSU WITH HIS DISCARDS, TOO.
.....
IS HARADA READY TO GO OUT.....?
SEEMS LIKE A PINZU ONE-SUIT HAND.
HON-ITSU OR CHIN-ITSU .....?
CHII!

BUT WHAT HIROYUKI DREW HERE WAS
URGH...!
IF HE'S READY TOO, THEN WE'RE FACING OFF
THIS WILL BE INTERESTING
5-PIN
THERE'S ALSO A GOOD POSSIBILITY HE'LL DEAL INTO MY HAND

OF ALL THINGS, THE DORA FOR HARADA'S PINZU ONE-SUIT HAND.
THE DORA, 5-PIN .....!

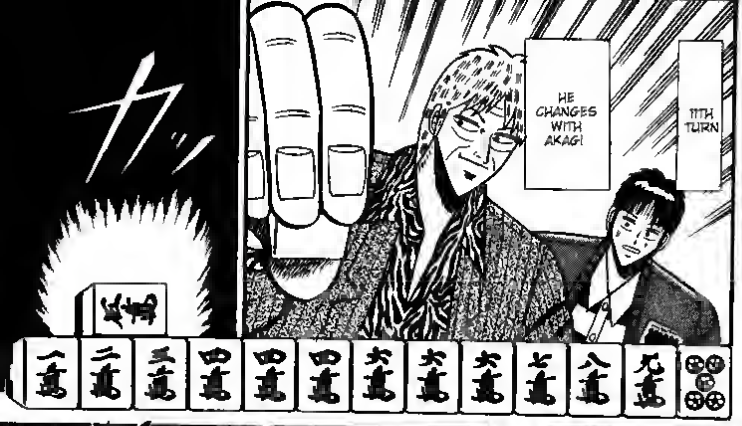
SHIT...!
I DON'T WANT TO STUPIDLY DEAL IN AT THE START
AS MUCH AS I WANT TO, I CAN'T DISCARD THIS
.....

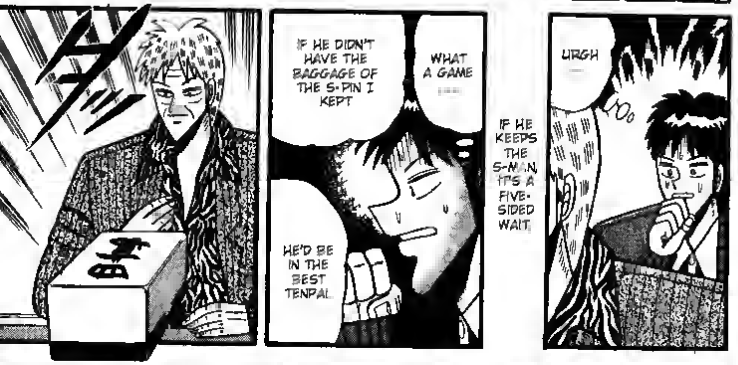
IF I HANG ONTO THIS TOO WITH THIS HAND
TON...!
AND THEN HIROYUKI'S DRAW ON THE NEXT TURN WAS
BUT
NATURALLY, TON IS ALSO A DANGEROUS TILE AGAINST HARADA
IT'S TOTALLY DEAD...!
BUT WITH THE TON, THERE'S STILL A CHANCE...
I CAN'T GET RID OF THE 5-PIN
.....

PON...!

OH NO
URGH
HEH HEH HEH

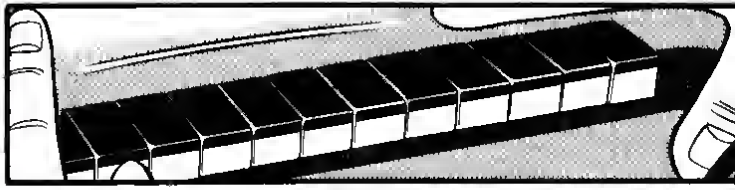
I GOT NERVOUS AND MADE A HALF-ASSED MOVE.
I'M TERRIBLE...!
IF I WAS GOING TO KEEP GOING WITH MY CHIN-ITSU, I SHOULD HAVE DEALT WITH THE 5-PIN WHEN I DREW IT.
IN THIS CASE, GETTING RID OF THE 5-PIN OR THE TON, IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE 5-PIN FIRST, ON PRINCIPLE
THAT WAS A DUMB MOVE
NOW THAT HE'S GOT FANPAI FOR A ONE-SUIT HAND, HE'LL BE IN TENPAI ON A MULTI-TILE WAIT AND WHAT'S MORE, HE'LL HAVE A LOT OF YAKU


11TH TURN
HE CHANGES WITH AKAGI


WHAT A GAME
IF HE DIDN'T HAVE THE BAGGAGE OF THE 5-PIN I KEPT
HE'D BE IN THE BEST TENPAI.
IF HE KEEPS THE 5-MAN, IT'S A FIVE-SIDED WAIT.
URGH

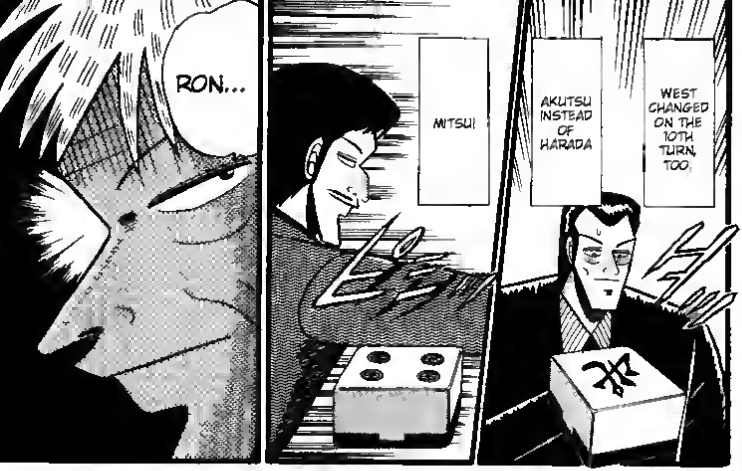
WHEN I HESITATED THAT ONE TURN
I RUINED THE CHIN-ITSU IN THE END.
SURE, OF COURSE.
EVEN AKAGI CAN'T MAKE A TILE PASS IF IT WON'T PASS...
...4-MAN ...

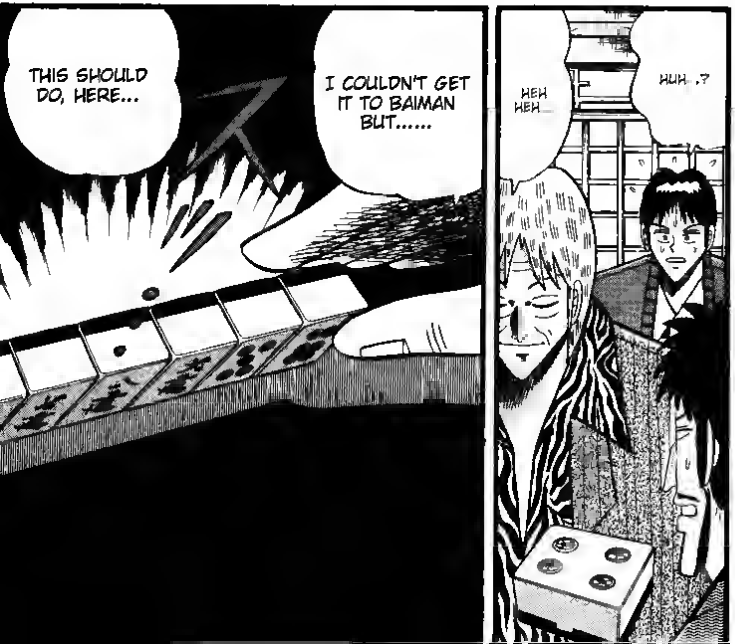
NEXT TURN
キュ…

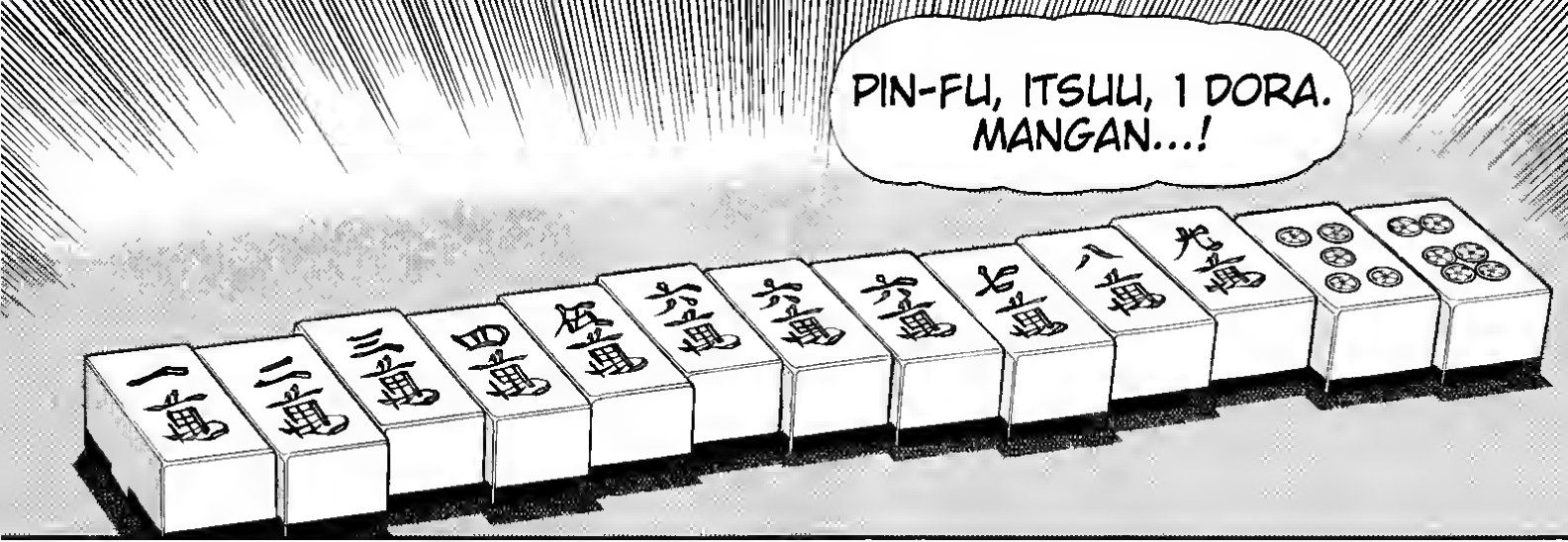


HIRO……
……?

RIGHT NOW YOUR FOOTSTEPS ARE THUMPING AROUND.
YOU SHOULD TAKE LIGHTER STEPS IN YOUR GAME.
IT'S UNGAINLY.
YOU'RE LETTING YOURSELF BE HELD CAPTIVE.


RON...
MITSUI
AKUTSU INSTEAD OF HARADA
WEST CHANGED ON THE 10TH TURN, TOO.


THIS SHOULD DO, HERE...
I COULDN'T GET IT TO BAIMAN BUT.....
HEH HEH...
HUH ,?

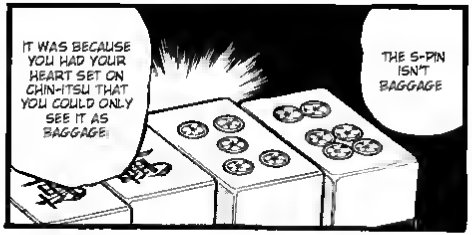

PIN-FU, ITSUU, 1 DORA.
MANGAN...!

AKAGI
IT'S GOING TO BE A HARSH BATTLE SO THAT KIND OF THINKING IS, WELL...

THE BLOOD RUSHES TO YOUR HEAD
AND YOU CAN'T ADAPT YOUR WAY OF THINKING ANYMORE

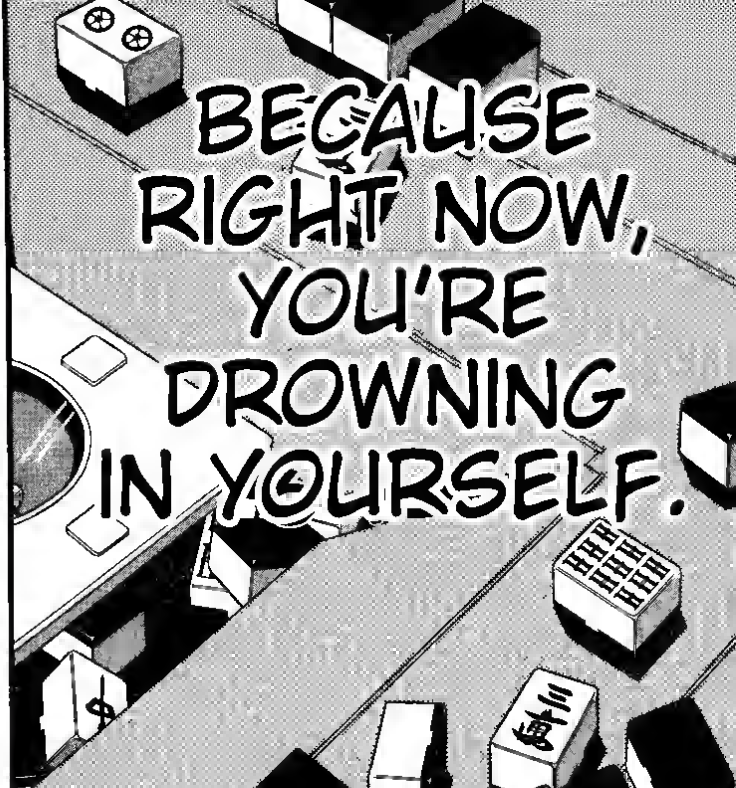
.....
.....

SWIM
YOU'D BETTER REMEMBER.


IT WAS BECAUSE YOU HAD YOUR HEART SET ON CHIN-ITSU THAT YOU COULD ONLY SEE IT AS BAGGAGE.
THE S-PIN ISN'T BAGGAGE

YOU WERE ALREADY THINKING IT WAS TOO GOOD.
AFTER GETTING A GOOD STARTING HAND

HEH HEH...
URGH...


BECAUSE
RIGHT NOW,
YOU'RE
DROWNING
IN YOURSELF.

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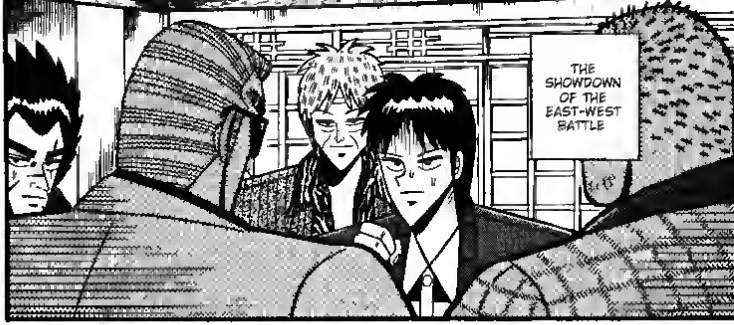
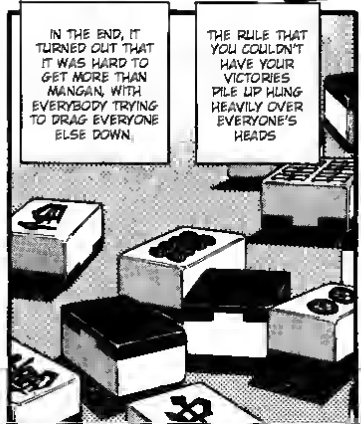
CHAPTER 63

ONE-HIT KILL


THE SHOWDOWN OF THE EAST-WEST BATTLE

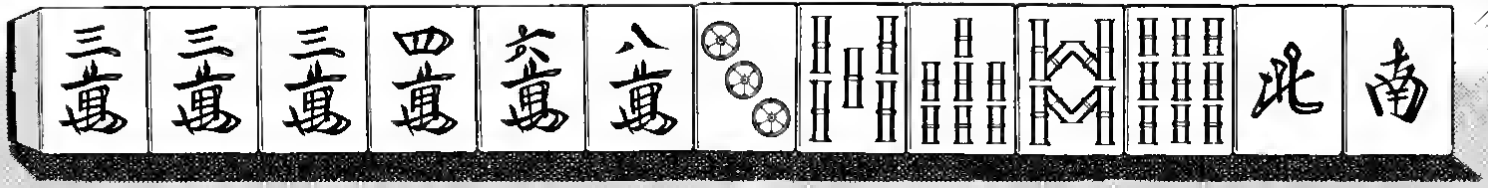
THIS WAS NOT THE CASE.
YOU WOULD THINK THIS WOULD LEAD TO FLASHY PLAYING STYLES, BUT
SO EVERYBODY WAS AIMING FOR MANGAN OR MORE
THE RULES IN THE SHOWDOWN GAME WERE THAT LESS THAN MANGAN DIDN'T COUNT FOR A WIN

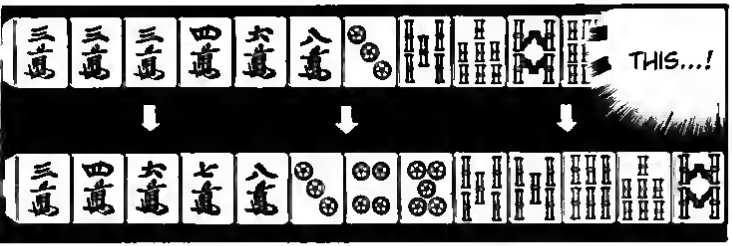

IN THE END, IT TURNED OUT THAT IT WAS HARD TO GET MORE THAN MANGAN, WITH EVERYBODY TRYING TO DRAG EVERYONE ELSE DOWN.
THE RULE THAT YOU COULDN'T HAVE YOUR VICTORIES PILE UP HUNG HEAVILY OVER EVERYONE'S HEADS

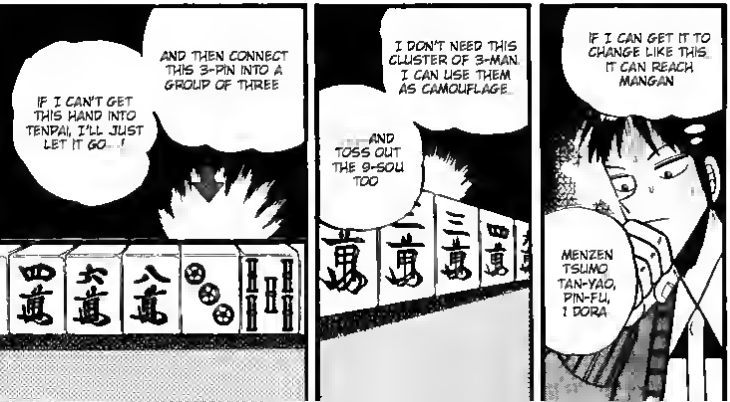
ABRUPTLY, THEY WOULD END UP TAKING A CHEAP WIN FOR THAT ROUND
WHEN SOMEONE GOT THE FEELING THAT AN OPPONENT HAD A REALLY GOOD HAND

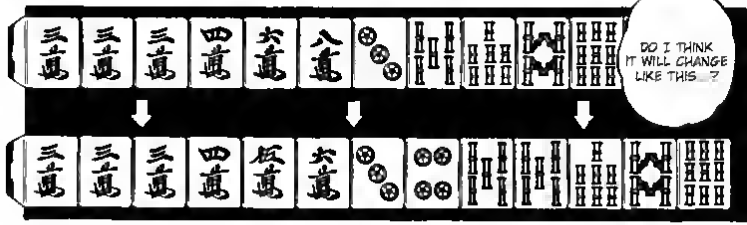
IN THIS GAME, YOU WANTED TO GET A DIRECT HIT SOMEHOW.
WITH TSUMO, THE HIT TAKEN BY WEST'S PLAYERS WAS LIMITED TO 2000 OR 4000 POINTS
ウィーン
WINNING BY TSUMO WAS BASICALLY MEANINGLESS
AND FOR THAT MANGAN
A PERSON COULDN'T GET A DIRECT HIT ON THE TOUGH PLAYERS FROM WEST WITH A HAND THAT'S EASY TO PREDICT.....
FOR A HAND WORTH MANGAN OR MORE, NATURALLY IT BECOMES EASY TO PREDICT BASED ON WHAT YAKU IT IS CONNECTED TO.
BUT THIS WAS DIFFICULT TOO.
TESTING THE HUNCHES A PERSON HAD ABOUT THE TILES IN THEIR HAND..... AND THEIR CREATIVE ABILITIES .....
BEING TESTED FROM THE MOMENT THEY GOT THEIR STARTING HAND, WITHOUT FORGIVING EVEN A SINGLE SLIP-UP ON A TILE...
A PERSON HAD TO COMPLETE THEIR YAKU WHILE MAINTAINING A PERFECT COVER.

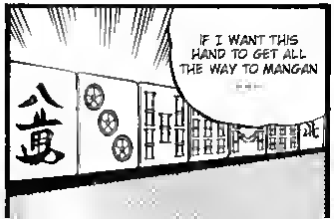
HIROYUKI'S HAND






IF I CAN'T GET THIS HAND INTO TENPAI, I'LL JUST LET IT GO...!
AND THEN CONNECT THIS 3-PIN INTO A GROUP OF THREE
I DON'T NEED THIS CLUSTER OF 3-MAN. I CAN USE THEM AS CAMOUFLAGE.
AND TOSS OUT THE 9-SOU TOO
IF I CAN GET IT TO CHANGE LIKE THIS, IT CAN REACH MANGAN
MENZEN TSUMO TAN-YAO, PIN-FU, 1 DORA

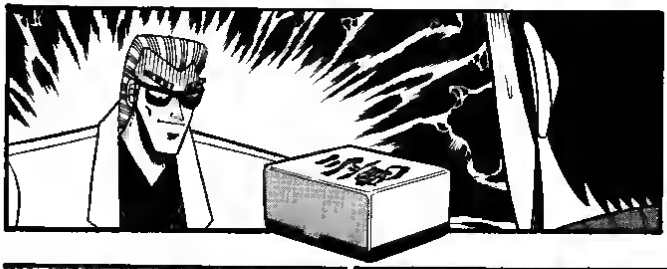


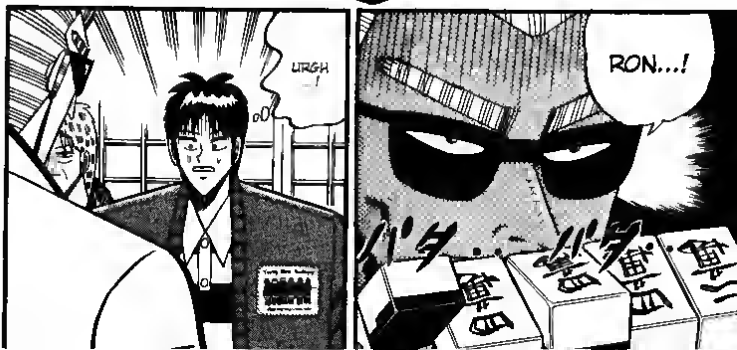


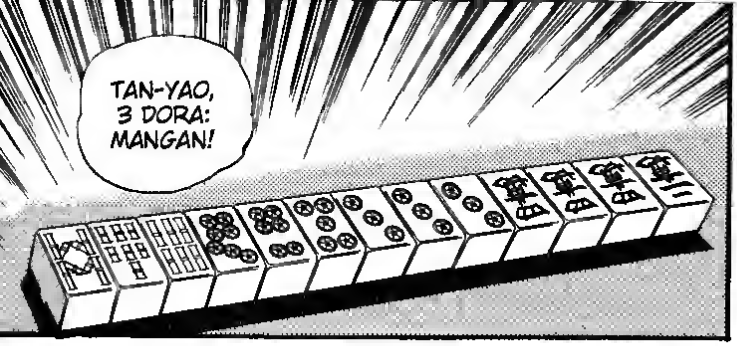
GO...!
GOT IT...!
URGH ...!
7TH TURN
RIICHI!

HIROYUKI'S
2-MAN OR 5-MAN WAIT
IT'S THE PERFECT TENPAI ……!
A 2-MAN OR 5-MAN WAIT……!
I TOOK CARE OF THE 3-MAN EARLY ON. AND I DON'T NEED ANY MORE CAMOUFLAGE THAT THAT……
I DID IT……!
IT'S IDEAL ..!
BUT
……
NOW I'LL FINALLY GET A SHOT IN……!
I HAVEN'T BEEN IN A GOOD POSITION SINCE THE SHOWDOWN STARTED BUT ……

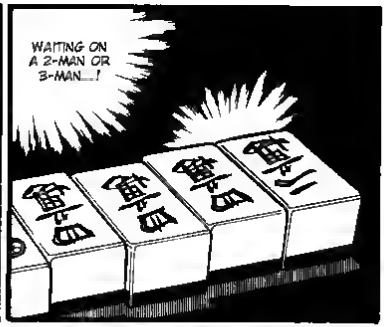
INSTEAD, ON THE 10TH TURN, HIROYUKI
WEST WOULDN'T DISCARD THE 2-MAN OR 5-MAN




URGH...!
RON...!

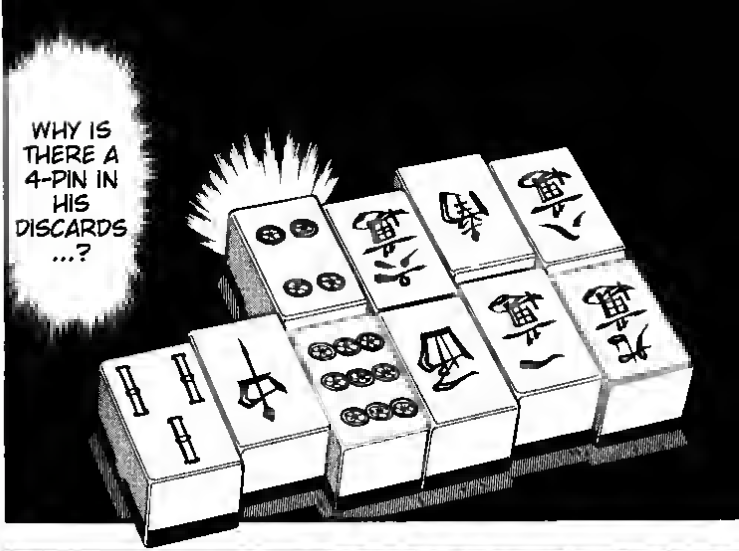

TAN-YAO, 3 DORA: MANGAN!

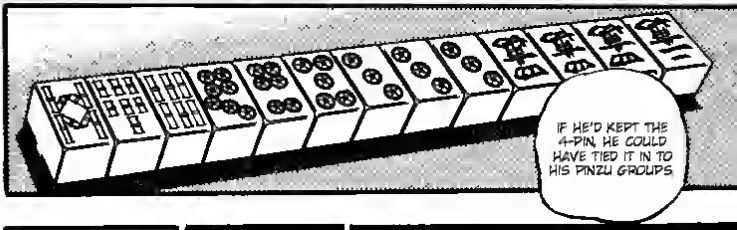
I ENDED UP DEALING IN WITH THE LAST 3-MAN.
WHAT'S GOING ON?

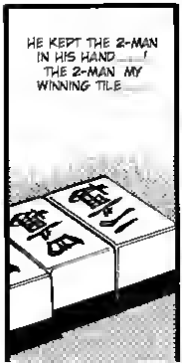

WAITING ON A 2-MAN OR 3-MAN....!

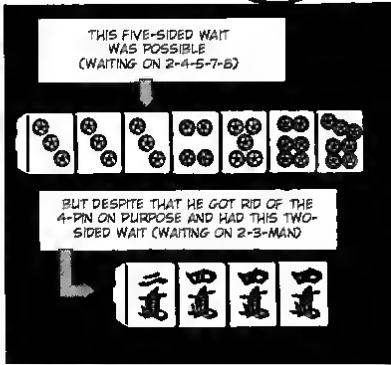
HUH ..?

AFTER THAT CAMOUFLAGE, IT TOTALLY SEEMED LIKE I COULD WIN..... THAT I PULLED UP A TILE WITH SUCH SLIM CHANCES IS
REALLY BAD FLOW.

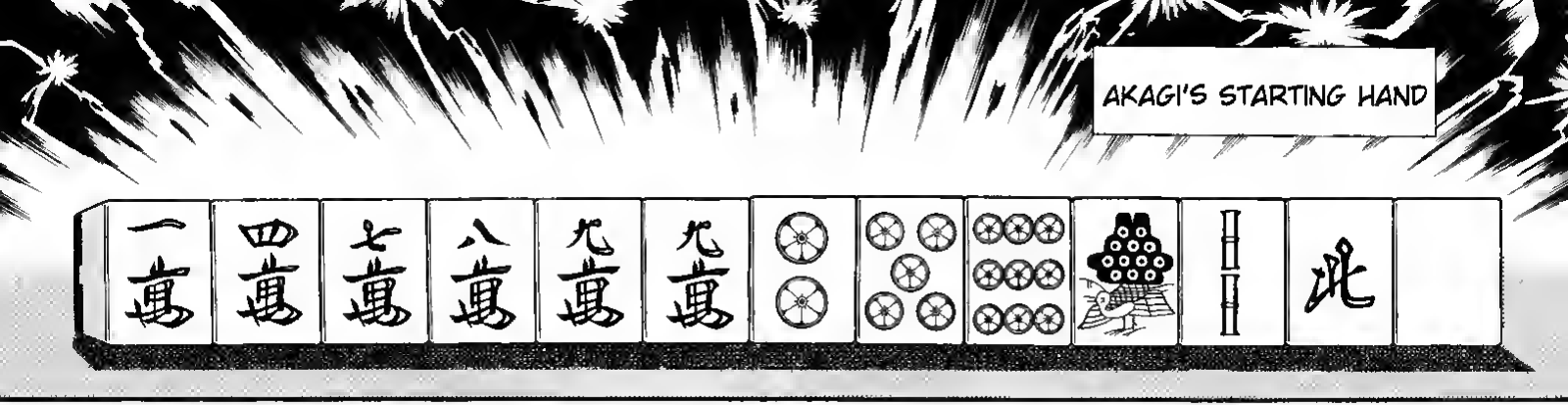

WHY IS THERE A 4-PIN IN HIS DISCARDS ...?


IF HE'D KEPT THE 4-PIN, HE COULD HAVE TIED IT IN TO HIS PINZU GROUPS

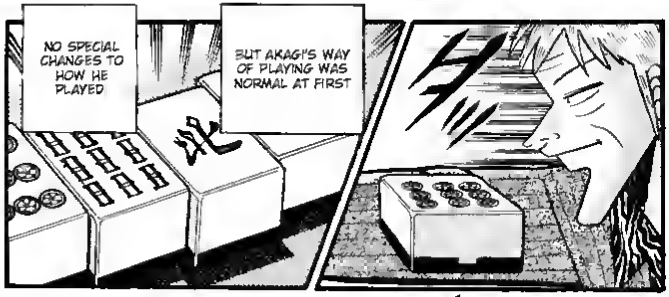

HE KEPT THE 2-MAN IN HIS HAND.....! THE 2-MAN MY WINNING TILE.....

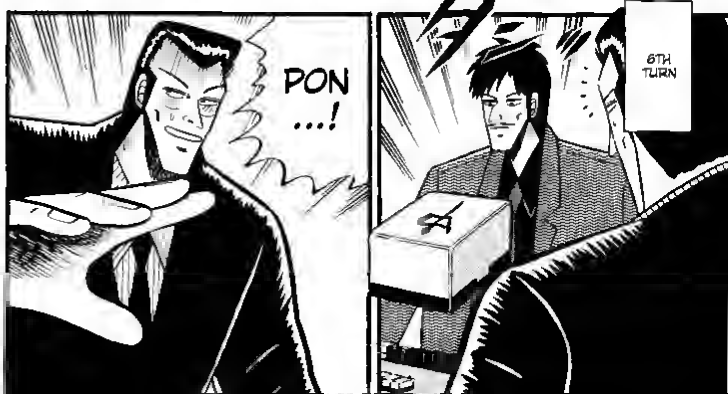

THIS FIVE-SIDED WAIT WAS POSSIBLE (WAITING ON 2-4-5-7-8)
BUT DESPITE THAT HE GOT RID OF THE 4-PIN ON PURPOSE AND HAD THIS TWO-SIDED WAIT (WAITING ON 2-3-MAN)

HEH HEH...
SHIT...
IT'S LIKE I'VE BEEN GIVEN AN UN-SOLV-ABLE PUZZLE...
BUT..... IF I COULDN'T DO IT BY DROPPING THOSE TWO TILES..... WHAT THE HELL SHOULD I HAVE DONE.....?
TO MAKE WEST DEAL IN.....?
HE SAW THROUGH MY CAMOUFLAGE...!
AKAGI BEGAN THE NEXT ROUND!
HE DIDN'T TAKE THE ROAD HIROYUKI TOOK.....!
BUT HE WENT BY A DIFFERENT ROUTE.
AKAGI SOLVED IT...!
THE PROPOSITION THAT HAD BEEN THOUGHT IMPOSSIBLE TO ANSWER, "TO GET A WIN WITH AN EASILY PREDICTED HAND"


AKAGI'S STARTING HAND

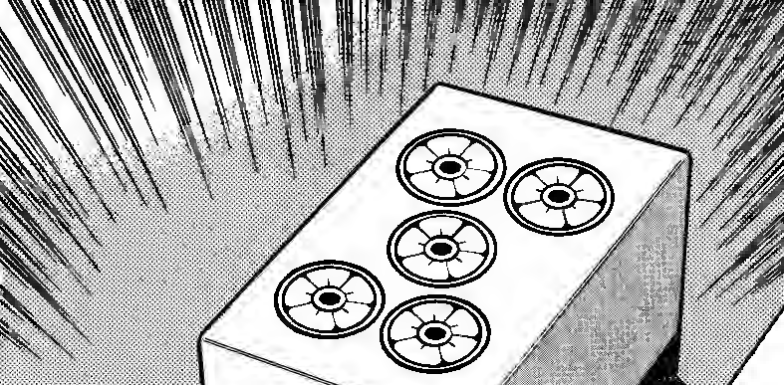
ざわ
AKUTSU FROM WEST PON'D ON THE DORA, CHUN.
THREE OF THE DORA, CHUN.....
FROM LOOKING AT HIS DISCARDS
IT COULD EVEN BE PINZU HON-ITSU


NO SPECIAL CHANGES TO HOW HE PLAYED
BUT AKAGI'S WAY OF PLAYING WAS NORMAL AT FIRST


PON ...!
6TH TURN

HE JUST CAN'T DISCARD PINZU
FOLD COMPLETELY.
IT'S A FATAL BLOW IN A GAME WHERE YOU CAN'T RECOVER POINTS
NOBODY CAN GO UP AGAINST THAT NOW
IF IT'S CHUN, 3 DORA, HON-ITSU
THAT'S DEALER HANEMAN.
18000 POINTS
BUT ON THE 9TH TURN, AKAGI
NOW WHAT WILL YOU DISCARD AKAGI
AFTER PUTTING ONE TILE IN
HE KEPT IT

URGH...
WHAT...?



さわ..
5-PIN...!
さわ..

WITHOUT A DOUBT, HE'S IN TENPAI...
SENDING OUT THE 5-PIN HERE MEANS .....

.....

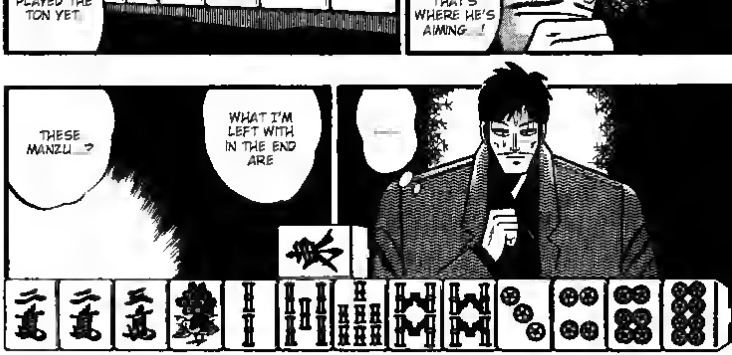
MITSUI
HE WOULDN'T DISCARD THAT TILE IF IT WAS A BLUFF...
BUT... I GUESS IF HE'S READY TO GO OUT, HE'S READY.....
WHAT THE HELL IS HE THINKING
RECKLESS AS USUAL
I CAN'T DISCARD FROM THE AREA AROUND THE 5-PIN
THESE SHAPES, AFTER TAKING CARE OF THE 5-PIN.....
WHAT SEEMS MOST LIKELY IS
WHAT IS HE WAITING ON..?
SO THEN

AKUTSU'S DISCARDS
IT'S A NORMAL STRATEGY FOR A PERSON IN TENPAI TO WAIT ON A TILE THAT'S ALREADY BEEN PLAYED BY THE PERSON IN RICH!
IN A CASE LIKE THIS

AND I CAN'T DISCARD ANYTHING AKUTSU HAS GOTTEN RID OF EITHER...

ALL THE PINZU AND SOUZU ARE OUT OF THE RUNNING
THIS AREA
SO THEN...
AND NOBODY'S PLAYED THE TON YET

I'VE BEEN PLAYING SIMILAR TILES TO AVOID GIVING EAST ANY FUEL FOR MAKING A PREDICTION...
AKUTSU WON'T BREAK UP HIS TENPAI... HE'LL PUSH AHEAD WITH WHAT HE HAS...
THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THAT'S WHERE HE'S AIMING...!

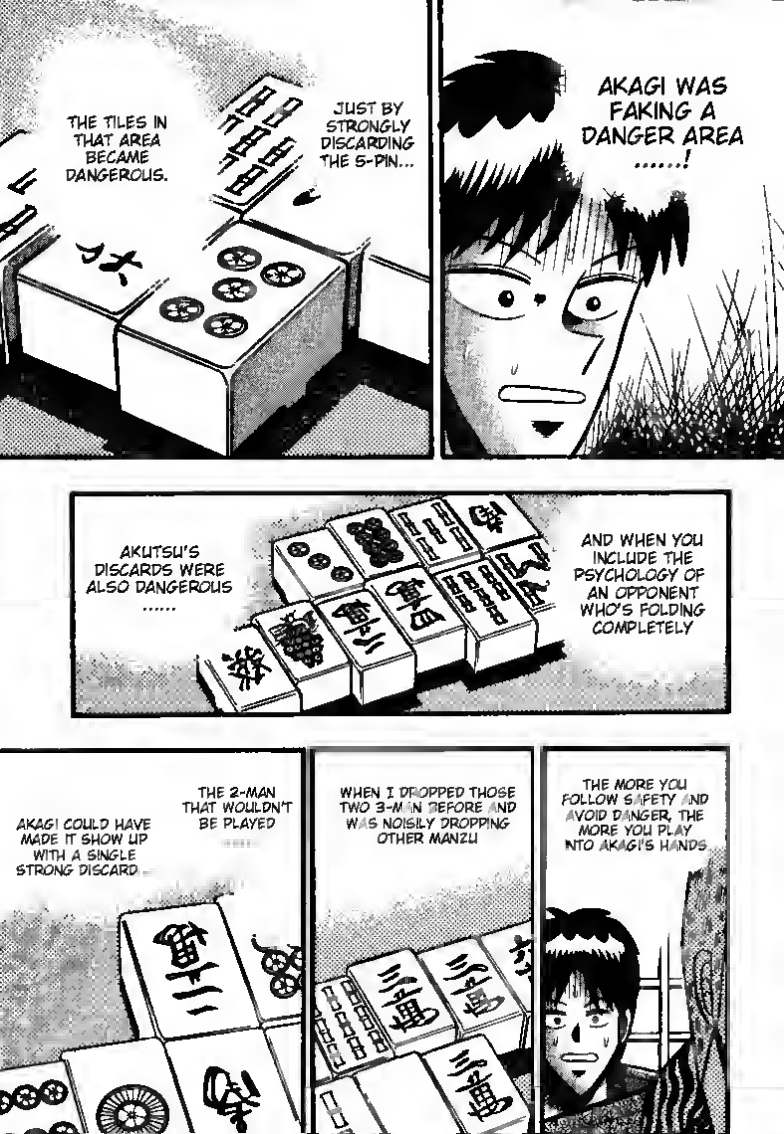

THESE MANZU...?
WHAT I'M LEFT WITH IN THE END ARE

I DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER CHOICES
AND SINCE I DON'T HAVE ANY TILES AKAGI HAS PLAYED BEFORE...

RON...!
THEN... WHY... DID HE KEEP THE 5-PIN UP UNTIL THE END...?
WHY.....?
IT'S JUST A DANGEROUS TILE, ISN'T IT?
THE 5-PIN HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE YAKU IN HIS HAND...
URGH...!
JUN-CHAN SAN-SHOKU...
A CLOSED WAIT ON THE 2-MAN...?
MANGAN...!

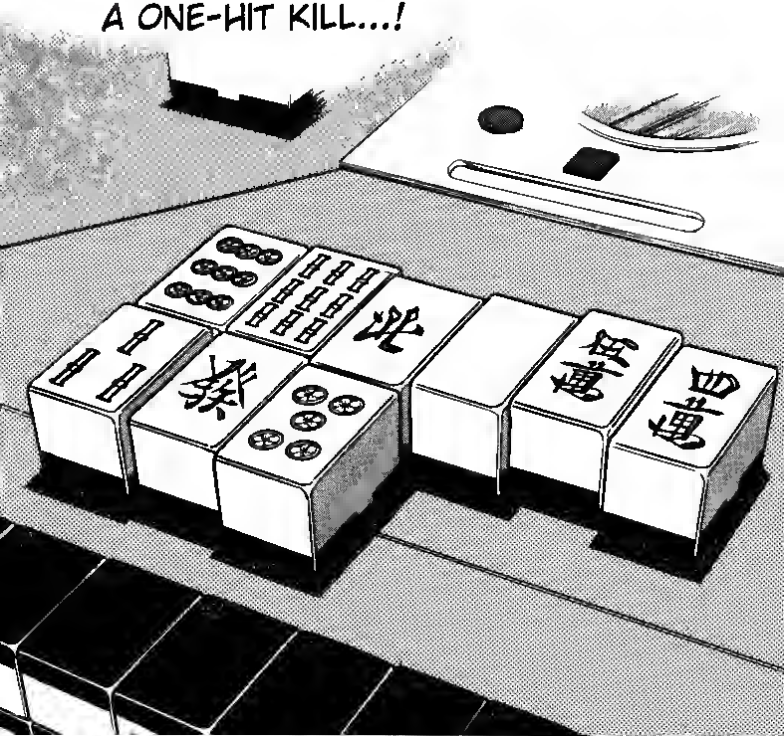
.....IT'S UNTHINKABLE.....
.....IT WAS A DECOY.....
HE ONLY... KEPT THE 5-PIN TO MAKE A STRONG DISCARD.
.....

WHEN I DROPPED TWO OF THE 3-MAN BEFORE I WAS PRETENDING THE 2-5-MAN AREA WAS A SAFE AREA BUT.....
THIS MAN HAS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WAY OF THINKING
HIS IDEAS ARE SO DIFFERENT!!


THE TILES IN THAT AREA BECAME DANGEROUS.
JUST BY STRONGLY DISCARDING THE 5-PIN...
AKAGI WAS FAKING A DANGER AREA .....!
AKUTSU'S DISCARDS WERE ALSO DANGEROUS .....
AND WHEN YOU INCLUDE THE PSYCHOLOGY OF AN OPPONENT WHO'S FOLDING COMPLETELY
AKAGI COULD HAVE MADE IT SHOW UP WITH A SINGLE STRONG DISCARD...
THE 2-MAN THAT WOULDN'T BE PLAYED .....
WHEN I DROPPED THOSE TWO 3-MAN BEFORE AND WAS NOISILY DROPPING OTHER MANZU
THE MORE YOU FOLLOW SAFETY AND AVOID DANGER, THE MORE YOU PLAY INTO AKAGI'S HANDS

ONE DISCARD BY A GENIUS
WILL WIN AGAINST
TEN DISCARDS OF AN AVERAGE PERSON
.....!

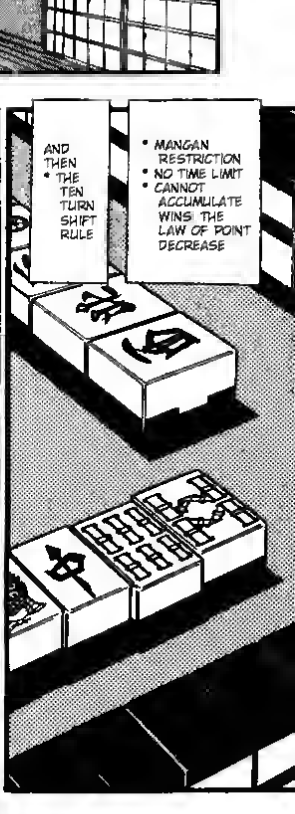
BEING ABLE TO AVOID BEING NOTICED
IS A GODLY SKILL TOO.....

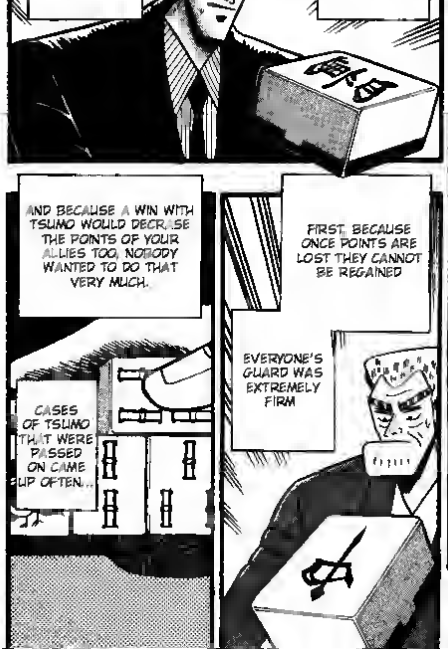


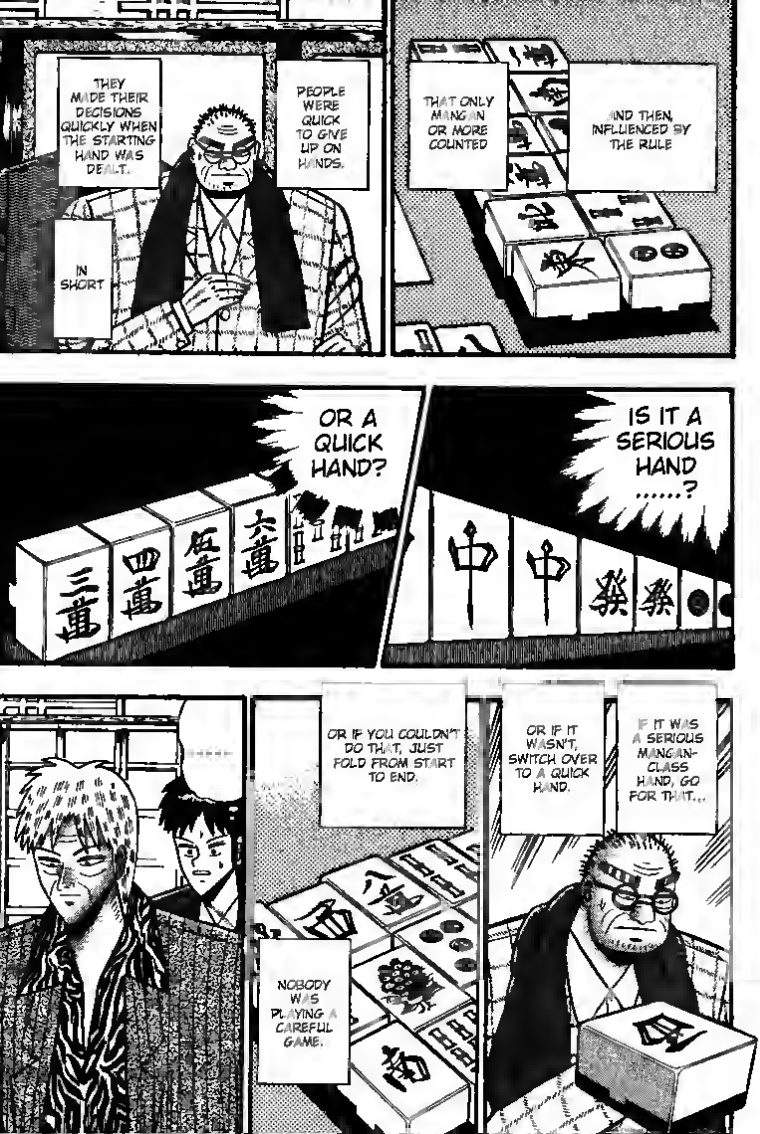
天
CHAPTER 64
DECOY

THE SHOWDOWN OF THE EAST-WEST BATTLE.

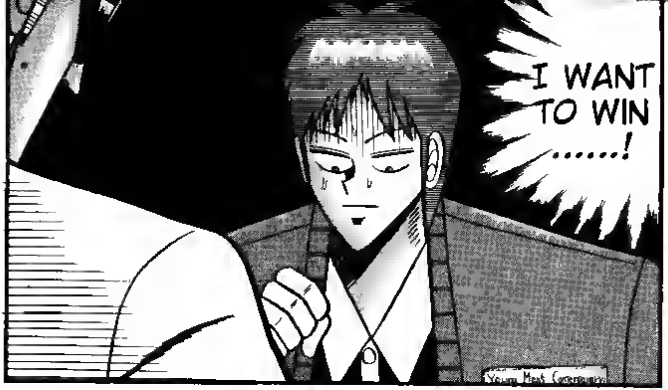
RIGHT AWAY, THE BASIC STRATEGIES OF THIS FIGHT BECAME CLEAR.
THE BATTLE STARTED WITH THESE IRREGULAR RULES BUT

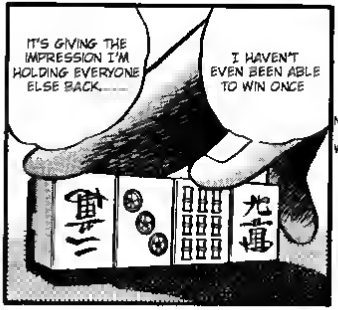

AND THEN • THE TEN TURN SHIFT RULE
• MANGAN RESTRICTION
• NO TIME LIMIT
• CANNOT ACCUMULATE WINS: THE LAW OF POINT DECREASE

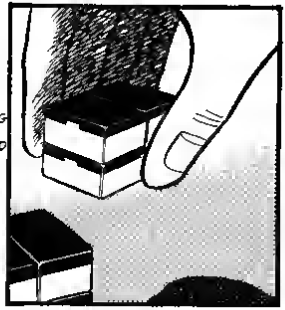

AND BECAUSE A WIN WITH TSUMO WOULD DECREASE THE POINTS OF YOUR ALLIES TOO, NOBODY WANTED TO DO THAT VERY MUCH.
FIRST, BECAUSE ONCE POINTS ARE LOST THEY CANNOT BE REGAINED
EVERYONE'S GUARD WAS EXTREMELY FIRM
CASES OF TSUMO THAT WERE PASSED ON CAME UP OFTEN...


THEY MADE THEIR DECISIONS QUICKLY WHEN THE STARTING HAND WAS DEALT.
PEOPLE WERE QUICK TO GIVE UP ON HANDS.
IN SHORT
THAT ONLY MANGAN OR MORE COUNTED
AND THEN, INFLUENCED BY THE RULE
OR A QUICK HAND?
IS IT A SERIOUS HAND .....?
三萬
四萬
伍萬
六萬
中
中
發
發
OR IF YOU COULDN'T DO THAT, JUST FOLD FROM START TO END.
OR IF IT WASN'T, SWITCH OVER TO A QUICK HAND.
IF IT WAS A SERIOUS MANGAN-CLASS HAND, GO FOR THAT...
NOBODY WAS PLAYING A CAREFUL GAME.

SO FAR, THERE HAD BEEN A MERE FOUR WINNING HANDS.
TWO HOURS PASSED AND THEY WERE IN THE SOUTH ROUND FOR THE SECOND TIME.
ニヤラ!!!
SO MUCH THAT IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU'RE BLESSED WITH A GOOD STARTING HAND AND DRAWS
IT'S HARD TO GET A DIRECT MANGAN HIT ON THESE PLAYERS
PROOF OF HOW DIFFICULT IT WAS TO GET A HIT IN.
TSUMO IS POSSIBLE,
EVEN IF IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO GET A HIT ON SOMEONE .....
ウィーン…
I CAN TSUMO HERE.
IF I CAN TSUMO, THE POINTS PAYMENT IS ONE PART EAST AND THREE PARTS WEST.
AT A TIME LIKE THIS, EVEN TSUMO WILL DO.
BUT THIS ROUND, THE DEALER IS MITSUI FROM WEST.


I WANT TO WIN .....!


IT'S GIVING THE IMPRESSION I'M HOLDING EVERYONE ELSE BACK.....
I HAVEN'T EVEN BEEN ABLE TO WIN ONCE


SO FAR NOTHING HAS WORKED OUT FOR ME

SOMEHOW

I WANT TO SCORE ON THEM SOMEHOW.

HIROYUKI'S HAND
THIS SHAPE...!
IF THERE'S A HINT I CAN GET IT IN FIVE TURNS
I'LL AIM FOR IT...!
I'LL GIVE IT FIVE TURNS...!
IF I CAN CONNECT IT TO RICHI AND PIN-FU
ITSUU, 1 DORA
THAT'S THE BEST I CAN DO
BUT I CAN'T SAY IT'S A VERY SERIOUS HAND EITHER.
IT'S NOT A FAST HAND
AT LEAST
BUT DESPITE THAT, IF I CAN GET THIS HAND TO GO UP TO MANGAN SOMEHOW
IT'S KIND OF CRUDDY
USING THE 7-MAN, THE DORA

5TH TURN

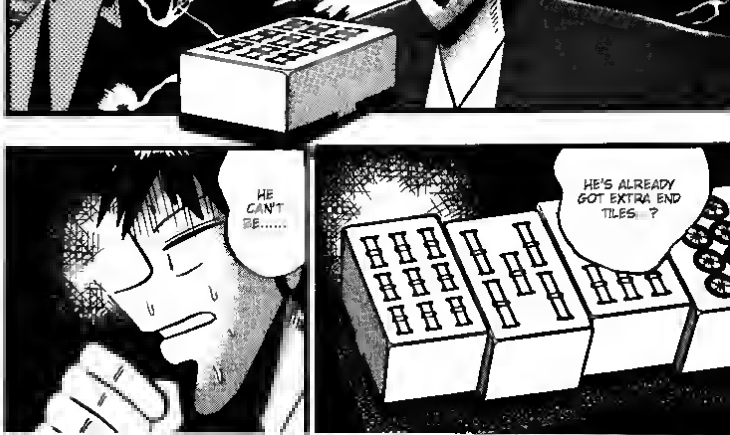
ONE MORE TILE AND IT'LL BE IN THE IDEAL SHAPE ...!
IT'S REACHING IT..!
IT'S GETTING THERE...!

HARADA ACROSS FROM ME...!
THE PROBLEM IS.....
MY HAND'S BEEN MAKING GOOD PROGRES.

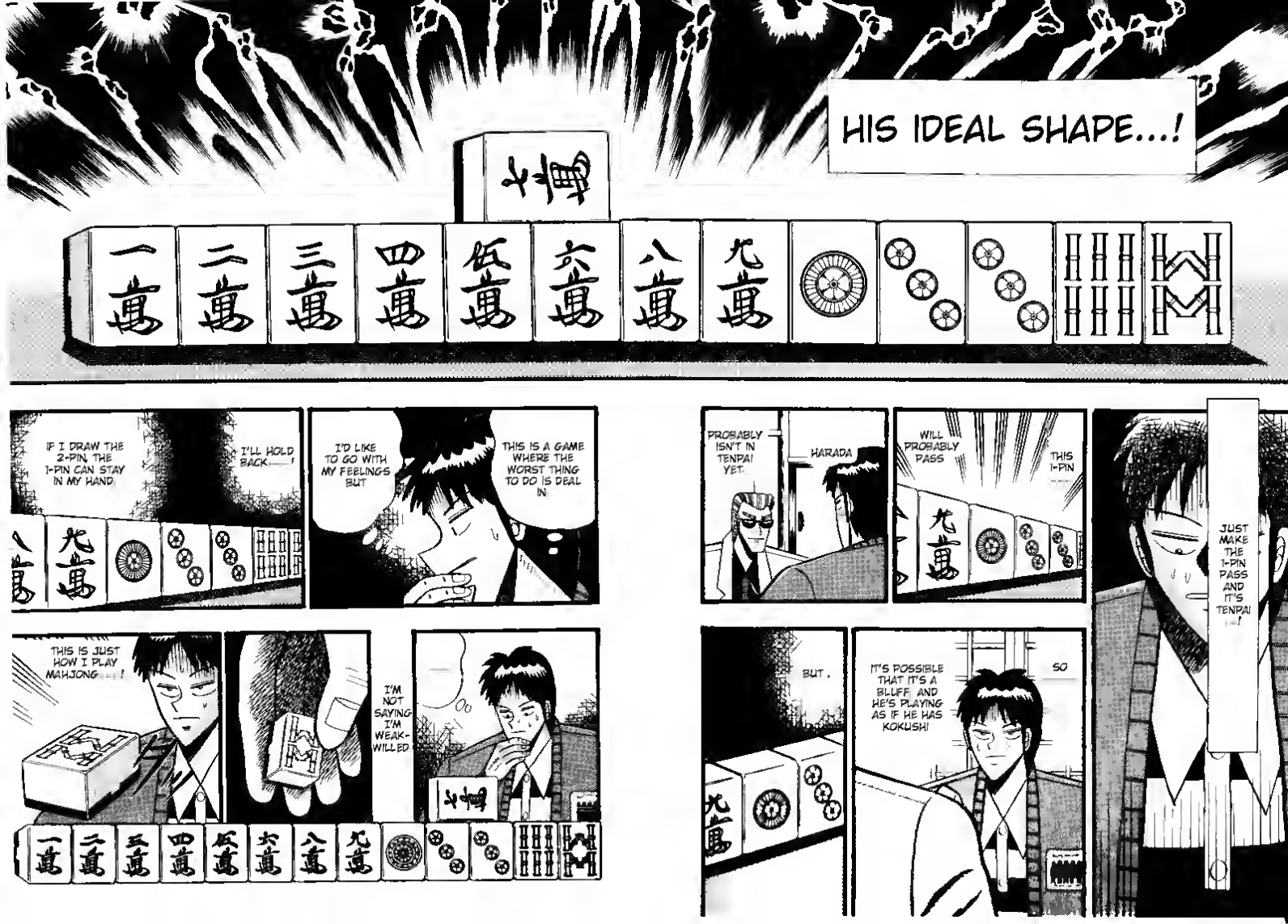
URGH...
I'M NOT LIKING THE WAY HE'S DISCARDING THEM.
KOKUSHI...?
WHAT'S UP WITH THOSE DISCARDS?

I'LL HAVE TO GET RID OF THE TILES OUT OF THAT AREA QUICKLY
CRAP...

URGH...!


HE CAN'T BE.....
HE'S ALREADY GOT EXTRA END TILES...?

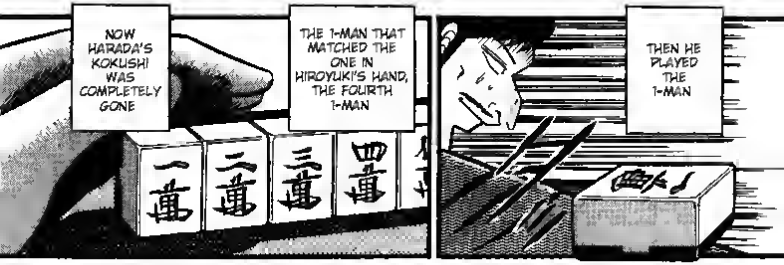
WHAT SHOULD I DO.....?
SHIT.....
BUT I CAN'T SEE ALL FOUR OF ANY END TILE ON THE TABLE.....!
DISCARD THE 1-PIN AND I'LL BE IN TENPAI
ONCE I GET THE 7-MAN OR 7-SOU.....
RIGHT AFTER THAT
HIROYUKI IS READY.....!
I STILL THINK IT'S SAFE, BUT.....
HE CAN'T BE.....
BUT.....

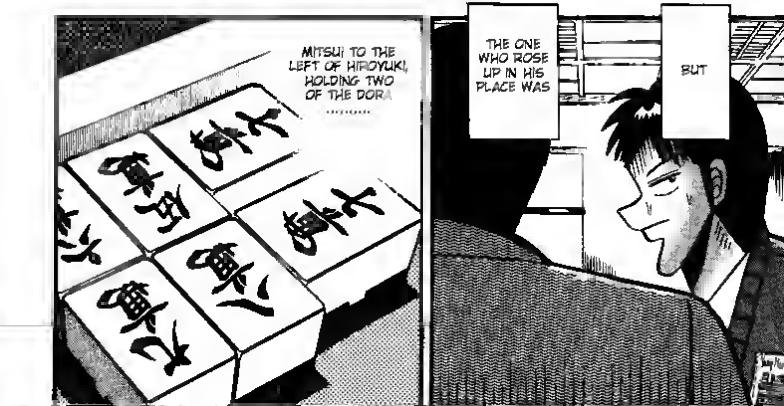

HIS IDEAL SHAPE...!
IF I DRAW THE 2-PIN, THE 1-PIN CAN STAY IN MY HAND.
I'LL HOLD BACK——!
I'D LIKE TO GO WITH MY FEELINGS BUT
THIS IS A GAME WHERE THE WORST THING TO DO IS DEAL IN
THIS IS JUST HOW I PLAY MAHJONG——!
I'M NOT SAYING I'M WEAK-WILLED
HARADA PROBABLY ISN'T IN TENPAI YET.
THIS 1-PIN WILL PROBABLY PASS
JUST MAKE THE 1-PIN PASS AND IT'S TENPAI——!
BUT,
IT'S POSSIBLE THAT IT'S A BLUFF AND HE'S PLAYING AS IF HE HAS KOKUSHI
SO

DRAWS THE WORST TILE AGAIN, THE NAN
BUT NEXT TURN HIROYUKI
TWO DANGER TILES IN HIS HAND...!
IS THIS REALLY THE END .....?
THE 1-PIN OR THE NAN MIGHT NOT GO THROUGH .....
RIGHT AFTER THAT, HARADA

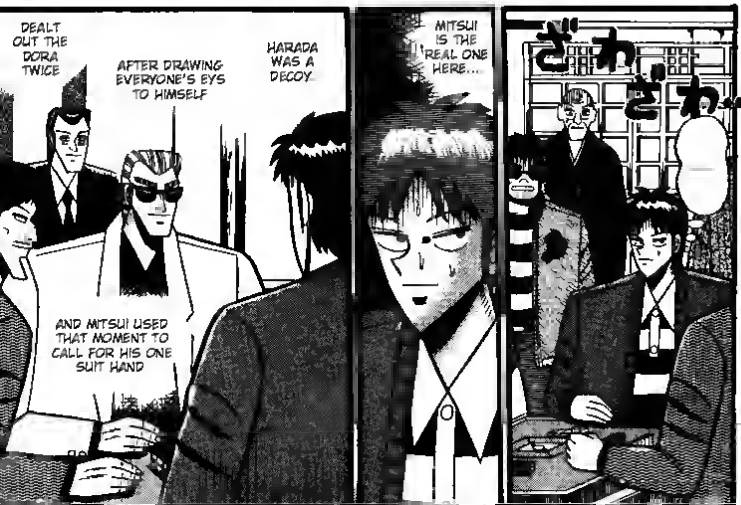
THE DORA 7-MAN, FROM INSIDE HIS HAND.....?
HUH...?
HE HAD ME GOING
SHIT...
HUH ...?
CHII.
IF HE WAS REALLY AIMING FOR KOKUSHI, HE WOULDN'T HAVE KEPT THE DORA FOR SO LONG...!
NOW I KNOW HE WAS FAKING THAT KOKUSHI.

カシ!!
AND IT WAS CALLED ON LIKE HE'D ARRANGED IT WITH MITSUI.
CHII.
PLAYED THE 7-MAN AGAIN.
NEXT TURN, HARADA


NOW HARADA'S KOKUSHI WAS COMPLETELY GONE
THE 1-MAN THAT MATCHED THE ONE IN HIROYUKI'S HAND, THE FOURTH 1-MAN
THEN HE PLAYED THE 1-MAN


MITSUI TO THE LEFT OF HIROYUKI, HOLDING TWO OF THE DORA
.....
THE ONE WHO ROSE UP IN HIS PLACE WAS
BUT

A CLEAR CHIN-ITSU, FOR HANEMAN!!

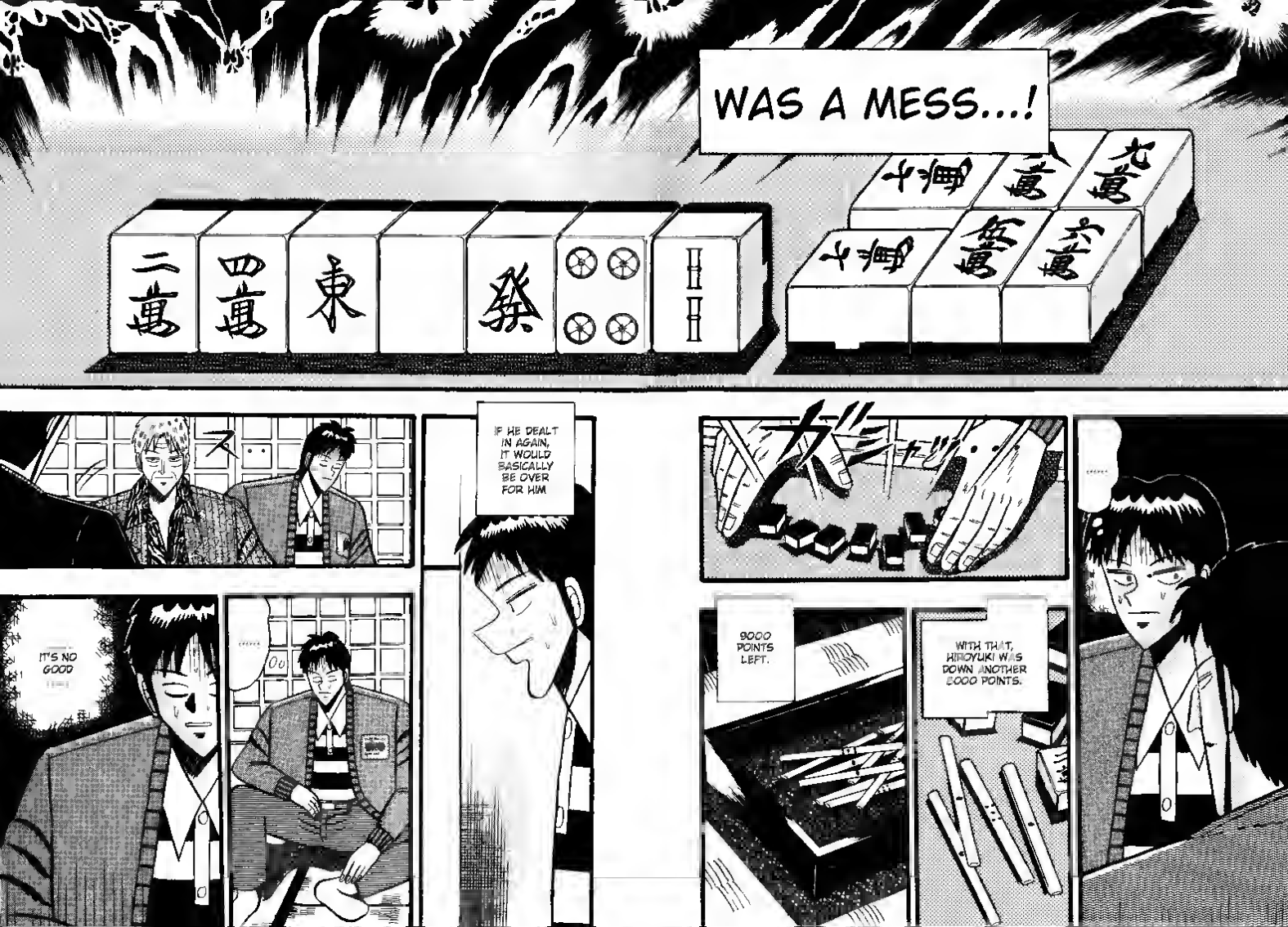

DEALT OUT THE DORA TWICE
AFTER DRAWING EVERYONE'S EYS TO HIMSELF
HARADA WAS A DECOY
AND MITSUI USED THAT MOMENT TO CALL FOR HIS ONE SUIT HAND
MITSUI IS THE REAL ONE HERE...
ざわ
ざわ

A HAND COULD SWELL UP WITH USELESS MANZU
IF IT'S NOT HANDLED WELL
FORCING A PERSON TO FOLD
I'M USING UP ALL OF MY MANZU
AS IT HAPPENS, I WON'T HAVE ANY EXTRA TILES THERE
WEST'S GOAL IS TO FORCE US TO FOLD
WITHOUT A CHANCE TO DISPOSE OF OUR MANZU
AND IS PLANNING TO WIN BY TSUMO
MITSUI PROBABLY HAS A MULTI-SIDED WAIT FOR THAT HANEMAN
THE 1-PIN AN 3-PIN ARE CONNECTED NOW...!
GOT IT...!
ゴッ
URGH..!
TENPAI FOR ITSUU, 1 DORA, WAITING ON THE 3-PIN...!

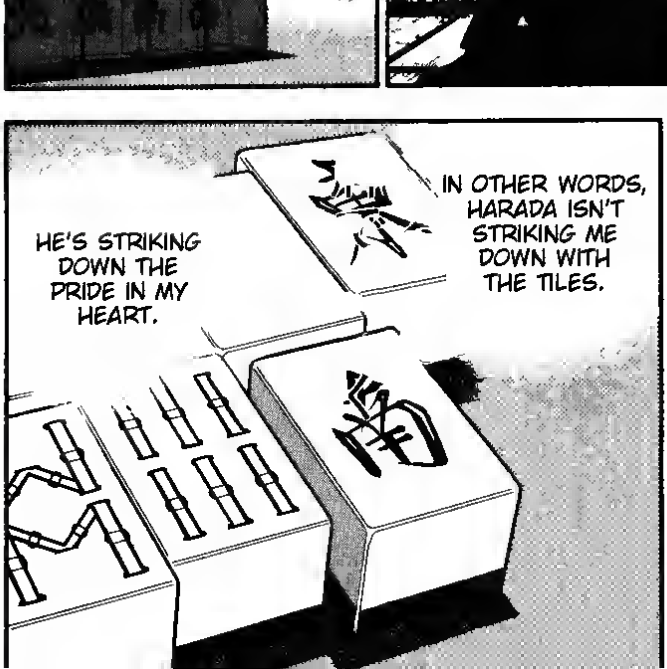
I'M LUCKY .....!
THANKFULLY, MITSUI HAS ALREADY PLAYED THE NAN.
FOLLOWING HIM EVEN MORE.
IF I DRAW A MANZU, I CAN JUST SWITCH THE SINGLE WAIT.
I'LL FOLLOW HIM INTO TENPAI ...!
.....
YEAH, YEAH, IT'S NOT GOING TO GO LIKE THEY THINK IT WILL .....

RON ...!
BUT IT'S ALL OVER NOW.
SORRY FOR CONFUSING YOU.
HEH HEH HEH .....
HUH ...?

THAT NAN IS THE LAST STOP ON THIS TRAIN .....!
BUT THIS KIND OF HAND
I HAD THOUGHT HARADA HAD KOKUSHI!
AT THAT TIME, MITSUI'S HAND
YES.
THE DECOY WAS MITSUI, BY CALLING ON THE DORA.
HEH HEH HEH
THAT'S CRAZY
MANGAN, 8000 POINTS.
NAN, HONITSU

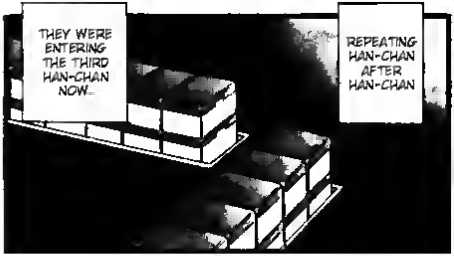

WAS A MESS...!
IF HE DEALT IN AGAIN, IT WOULD BASICALLY BE OVER FOR HIM
IT'S NO GOOD
.....
9000 POINTS LEFT.
WITH THAT, HIROYUKI WAS DOWN ANOTHER 6000 POINTS.
.....

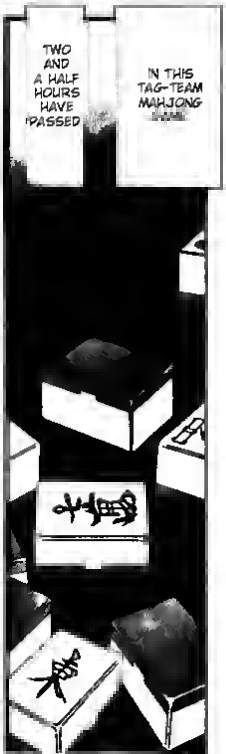
THE IMPRESSION THAT HE'S ALWAYS GOING AFTER ME
I'M GETTING
HARADA'S ALWAYS ONE TILE AHEAD...
MY SPECULATIONS ARE ALWAYS OFF
HE'S TAKING ME OUT WITH THE TRAPS HE SET UP OVER THERE

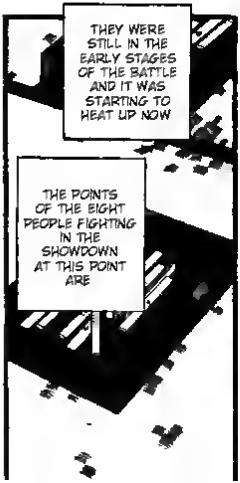

HE'S STRIKING DOWN THE PRIDE IN MY HEART.
IN OTHER WORDS, HARADA ISN'T STRIKING ME DOWN WITH THE TILES.

CHAPTER 65
THE SLEEPING LION

THE SHOWDOWN OF THE EAST-WEST BATTLE


THEY WERE ENTERING THE THIRD HAN-CHAN NOW...
REPEATING HAN-CHAN AFTER HAN-CHAN


TWO AND A HALF HOURS HAVE PASSED
IN THIS TAG-TEAM MAHJONG


THEY WERE STILL IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE BATTLE AND IT WAS STARTING TO HEAT UP NOW
THE POINTS OF THE EIGHT PEOPLE FIGHTING IN THE SHOWDOWN AT THIS POINT ARE

SO FAR THERE HAD BEEN FIVE WINS THAT COUNTED (MANGAN OR MORE)

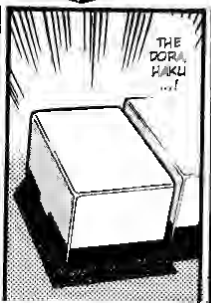
AKUTSU AT 23000
SOGA WAS AT 21000.
HARADA WAS THE ONLY ONE WITH THE POINTS HE STARTED WITH, 25000.
FIRST OFF, WEST.
MITSUI'S FALL STOOD OUT AMONG WEST'S PLAYERS.
AND MITSUI WHO HAD BEEN HIT TWICE HAD 9000 REMAINING.
AT THE STARTING DISTRIBUTION OF 25000
TEN AND GINJI WERE UNHARMED
ON THE OTHER HAND, EAST
DEFINITELY HIROYUKI, WHO HAD DEALT INTO HARADA'S HANDS TWICE.
AND THE ONE IN THE MORE DIRE SITUATION WAS
AKAGI WAS AT 23000.

IF HE DEALT INTO A HANEMAN AT THIS POINT IN TIME IT WOULD ALL BE OVER
9000 LEFT .....!
AKAGI DISCARDED TWICE AND SWITCHED WITH HIROYUKI.
IN ANOTHER 10 TURNS
HIROYUKI WOULD HAND IT BACK OVER
NOW THAT HIRO HAS 9000 POINTS LEFT
THE PROBLEM IS RATHER
WHAT IS WEST GOING TO DO WITH HIM.....?
SO WEST IS AFTER HIRO HUH.....
WELL, I THOUGHT IT WOULD PROBABLY COME DOWN TO THIS BUT

OR JUST LEAVE HIM HALF-DEAD .....?
CHOP HIM DOWN IN ONE BLOW .....?

WEST'S PLAN.
WE'LL PROBABLY GET A GLIMPSE OF IT THIS ROUND.

IT WOULD BE ENOUGH FOR MANGAN ON ITS OWN .....
IF SOMEONE CALLS ON THAT


THE DORA, HAKU ...!

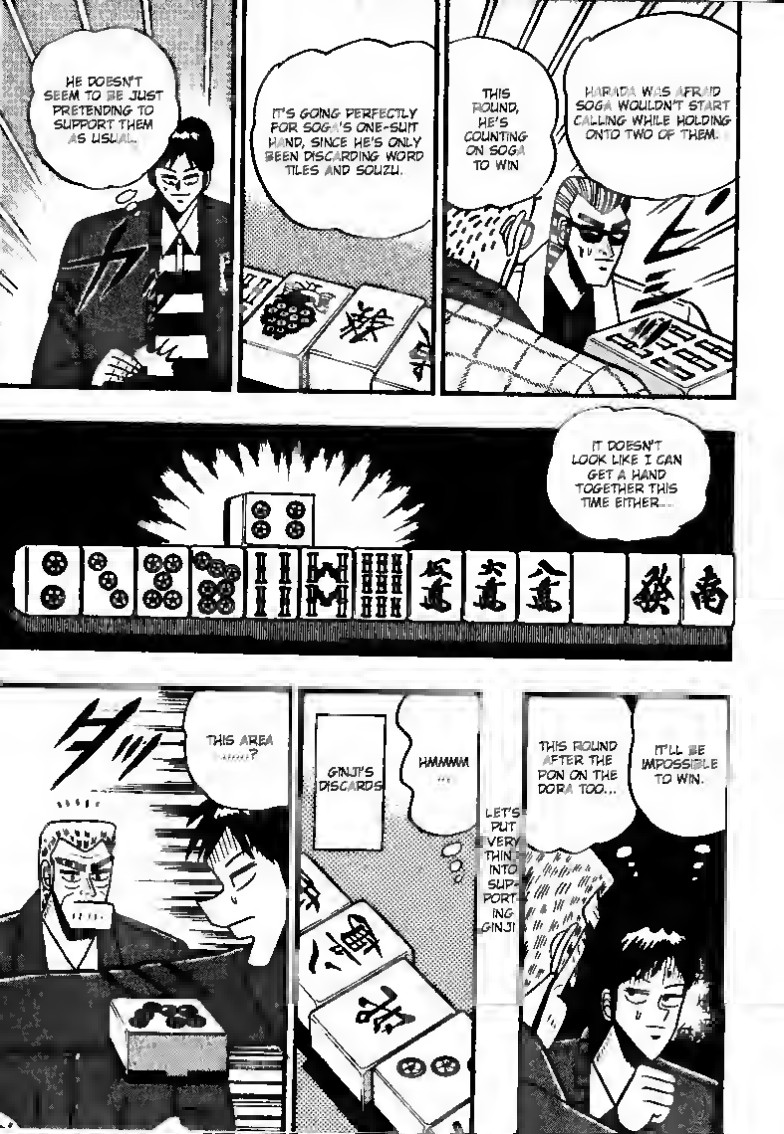
URGH...

HUH .?
PON.....
IF WE COULD CALL ON A TILE LIKE THAT, WE COULD STRIKE A BLOW AGAINST WEST
IT'S THE BEST SET-UP.
BECAUSE YOU DON'T NEED TO TIE IT TO ANY OTHER YAKU, YOU'RE FREE TO PICK YOUR WAIT—
TO CALL PON ON THE DORA, HAKU.....!
GINJI WAS THE ONE WHO RAISED HIS VOICE

ISN'T A TILE HARADA WOULD GET RID OF EARLY ON WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT
...BUT THAT HAKU
THE TABLE BECAME TENSE ALL AT ONCE...
WITH THAT PON RIGHT AT THE START
わざわ
...HE MUST BE PLOTTING SOMETHING
THAT SUSPICION OF HIROYUKI'S SOON PROVED RIGHT
CHII!
CHII ...!

BLATANTLY SUPPORTING SOGA'S CHIN-ITSU...!

GINJI ENDED UP CALLING ON IT, BUT
IT BACK-FIRED IN THE END
THAT HAKU AT THE START WAS SUPPORT FOR SOGA, TOO.
I SEE.

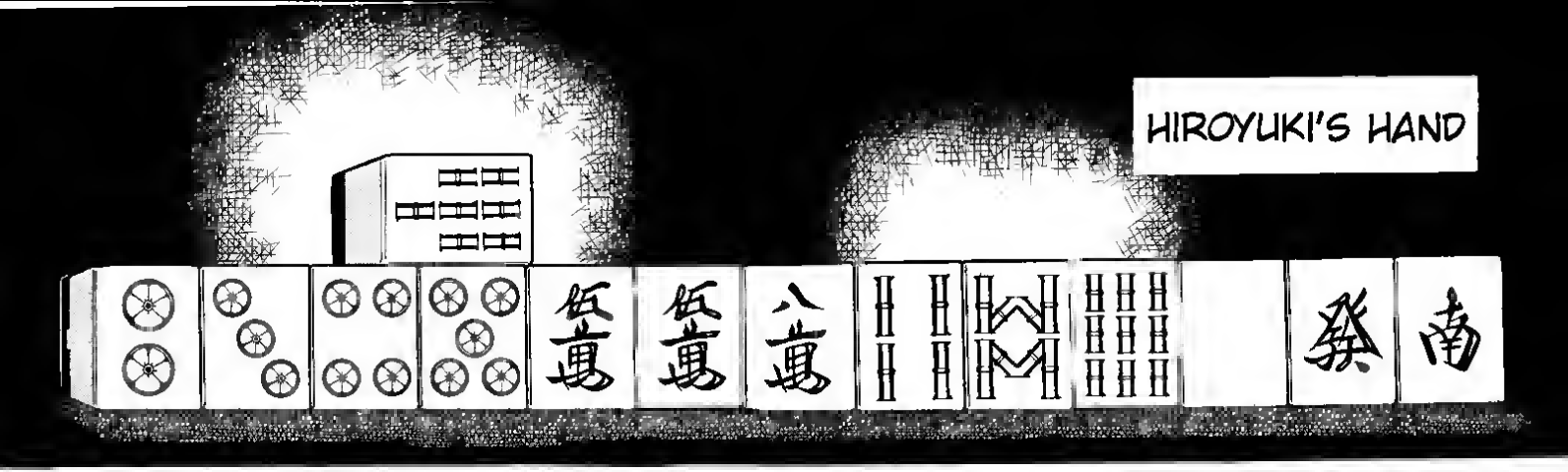

HE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE JUST PRETENDING TO SUPPORT THEM AS USUAL.
IT'S GOING PERFECTLY FOR SOGA'S ONE-SUIT HAND, SINCE HE'S ONLY BEEN DISCARDING WORD TILES AND SOUZU.
THIS ROUND, HE'S COUNTING ON SOGA TO WIN
HARADA WAS AFRAID SOGA WOULDN'T START CALLING WHILE HOLDING ONTO TWO OF THEM.
IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE I CAN GET A HAND TOGETHER THIS TIME EITHER...
THIS AREA.....?
GINJI'S DISCARDS
HMMMM...
LET'S PUT VERY THIN INTO SUPPORTING GINJI
THIS ROUND AFTER THE PON ON THE DORA TOO...
IT'LL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO WIN.

AFTER THAT, HIROYUKI KEPT GIVING HIM SUPPORT.
CHII!
GINJI DIDN'T RESPOND.
HE DISCARDED THE 6-MAN AND 3-PIN BUT
THE 4-MAN DIDN'T WORK EITHER.
ピン!!
...WHICH MEANS .....
WHAT GINJI HAS ISN'T MANZU OR PINZU.
.....

SOUZU ...!

WHAT DO I DO.....?

IF I DON'T HANDLE THESE SOUZU WELL
BUT SOGA MUST BE IN TENPAI BY NOW TOO
I COULD DEAL INTO HIS HAND TOO BY LENDING SUPPORT...


HIROYUKI'S HAND

IT'S OVER FOR ME
IF I DEAL INTO A HANEMAN HAND WITH ONLY 9000 POINTS LEFT

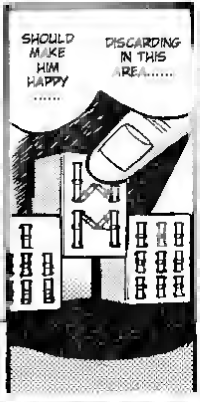
AND IF I DEAL IN WITH UPPER SOUZU, AND IT'S TIED TO ITSUU
THAT'S HANEMAN
AFTER THOSE CALLS, ANY WAY I LOOK AT IT, IT STINKS OF UPPER SOUZU

IT CAN'T BE HELPED
A COMPROMISE PLAN

IF I DISCARD HERE, EVEN IF I DEAL IN, IT'S ONLY MANGAN

THAT GINJI ISN'T GETTING THE UPPER SOUZU I GUESS...?
GETTING A FLOW LIKE THIS MEANS
I GOT 8-SOU AND 7-SOU LATER, TURNING IT INTO A GROUP OF THREE

SOGA IS ALSO AFTER UPPER SOUZU.
.....BUT,


SHOULD MAKE HIM HAPPY
.....
DISCARDING IN THIS ARE.....

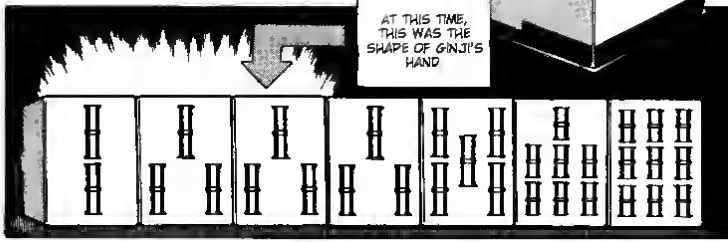
WHEN I GOT MY STARTING HAND 9-SOU WAS THE ONLY SOUZU I HAD

.....

Ooo

HE PLAYED THE 4-SOU

AT THIS TIME, THIS WAS THE SHAPE OF GINJI'S HAND



CHII AND DISCARD THE 5-SOU.

IF HE COULD HAVE SUPPORTED HIM WITH THE 5-SOU, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IDEAL.

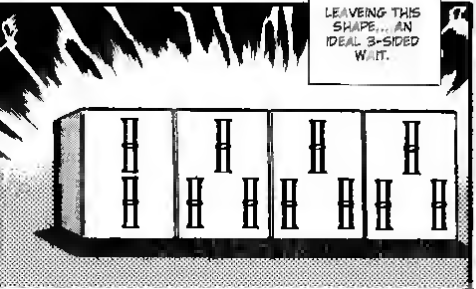
BUT THE TENPAI SHAPE LEFT AFTER WOULD BE A BAD MOVE ANY WAY YOU LOOKED AT IT, LEAVING HIM WITH A CLOSED WAIT.

HE COULD CALL ON THAT 4-SOU

CLOSED 6-SOU OR

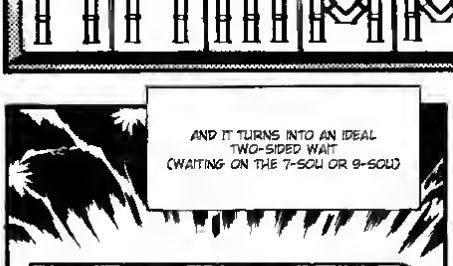
CLOSED 8-SOU

LEAVEING THIS SHAPE... AN IDEAL 3-SIDED WAIT.

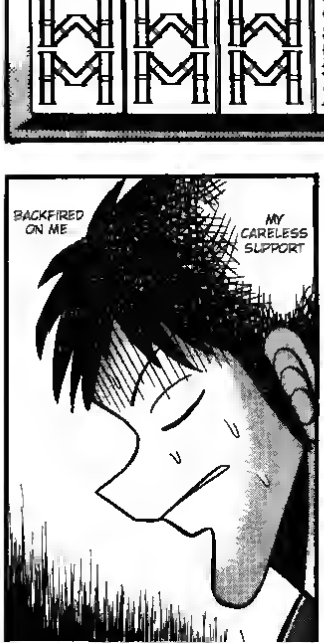


PON...!
GINJI DECIDED TO CALL ON IT AFTER A BRIEF THOUGHT.
THE INSTANT HE OPENED HIS MOUTH TO CALL "CHI!"
SO IN FACT, ON THE 4-SOU THAT CAME OUT.....
BUT HAVING SAID THAT, HE COULDN'T DO THAT.
HUH ...?
HEH HEH HEH .....
HEH HEH...

AT THE TIME, THE SHAPE OF SOGA'S HAND WAS THIS....

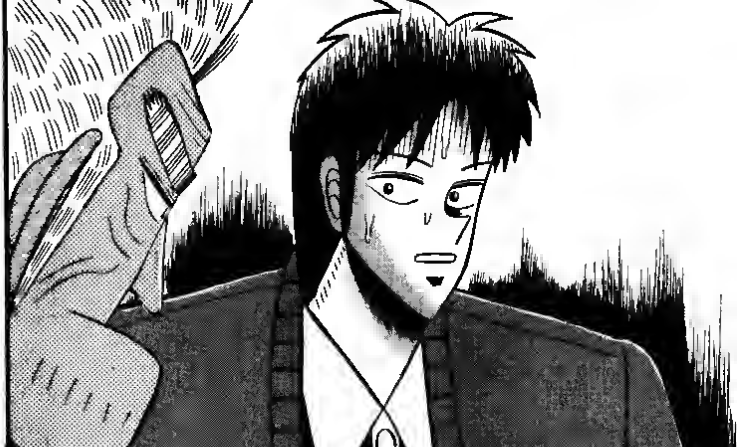

AND IT TURNS INTO AN IDEAL TWO-SIDED WAIT (WAITING ON THE 7-SOU OR 9-SOU)

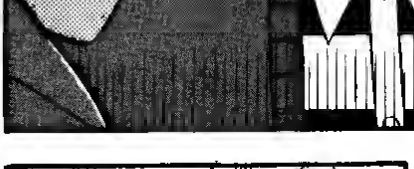
PON ON THE 4-SOU FROM THIS SHAPE
PLAY THE 6-SOU


BACKFIRED ON ME
MY CARELESS SUPPORT

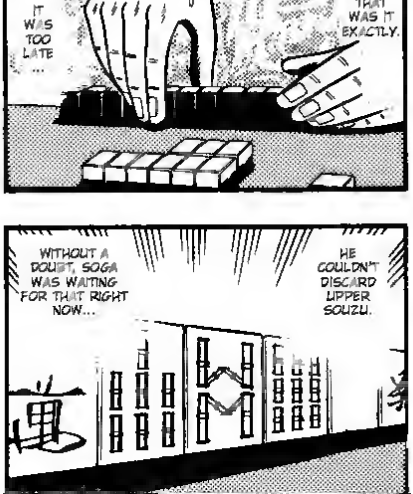
ざわ!!
ざわ...
OH CRAP!!

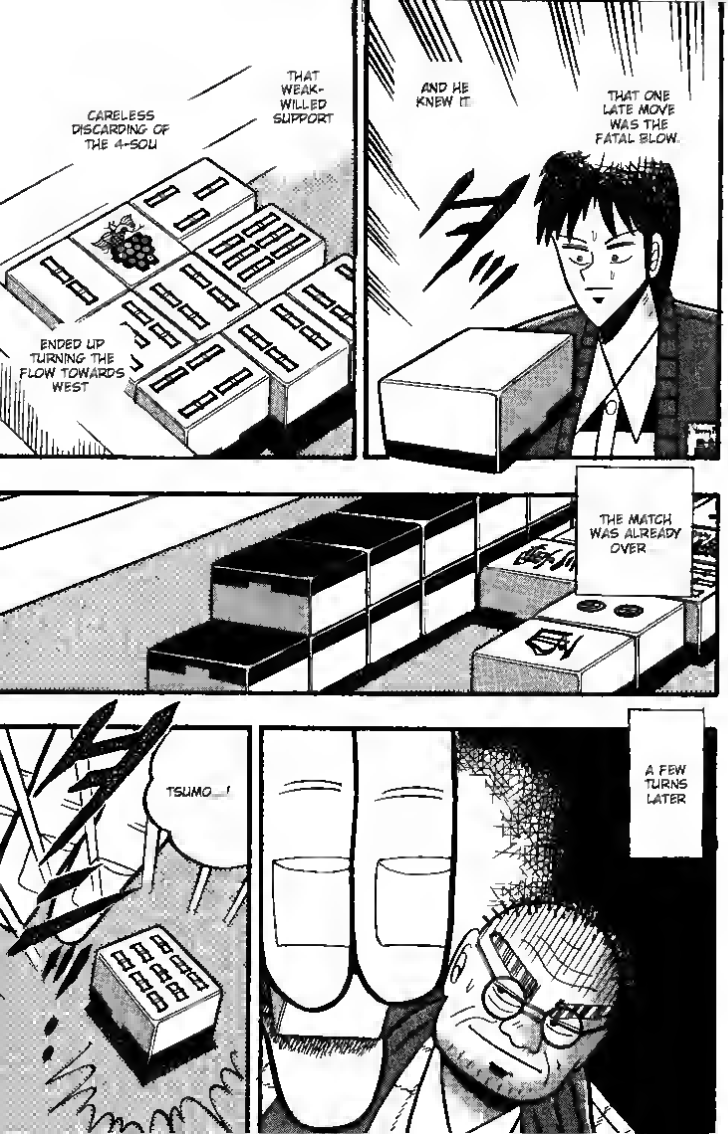
カッ...
SHIT...
HUH...?
STOP IT
THIS AREA
STILL
IT'S TOO LATE NOW...




IT WAS TOO LATE ...
THAT WAS IT EXACTLY.

YES...


WITHOUT A DOUBT, SOGA WAS WAITING FOR THAT RIGHT NOW...
HE COULDN'T DISCARD UPPER SOUZU.


CARELESS DISCARDING OF THE 4-SOU
THAT WEAK-WILLED SUPPORT
ENDED UP TURNING THE FLOW TOWARDS WEST
AND HE KNEW IT
THAT ONE LATE MOVE WAS THE FATAL BLOW.
THE MATCH WAS ALREADY OVER
TSUMO...!
A FEW TURNS LATER

CHIN-ITSU, 8000 POINTS.
HEH HEH HEH
.....
I'M THE WORST...
AND MADE GINJI'S PERFECT HAND USELESS
WITH THIS TSUMO I BROUGHT GINJI DOWN 4000 POINTS TOO.....
HEH HEH...
.....
IT'S MY FAULT...
.....

I HAVEN'T DECIDED HOW I WANT TO TAKE HIM OUT YET BUT...
THAT HIROYUKI
WE DROVE HIROYUKI DOWN TO 9000 POINTS...

BETTER TO LEAVE HIM NOT QUITE ALIVE AND NOT QUITE DEAD
IT'D BE A WASTE TO KILL HIM OFF IN ONE BLOW
WHEN YOU SEE HOW HE'S JUST COWERING AWAY FROM PLAYING...
JUST LOOK AT HIM NOW
IT'S AS GOOD AS SETTLED

HE'LL PROBABLY JUST KEEP COWERING EVEN MORE NOW...
IF HE'D DEALT IN THIS TIME, HE'D HAVE BEEN DONE FOR
WITH THAT TSUMO, HIROYUKI IS DOWN 2000 POINTS TOO, TO 7000.

BAST WILL BE FORCED TO CALL OFF THEIR ATTACKS. SINCE THEY'LL BE FLYING ON ONE ENGINE
THE ONLY ONES LEFT ARE TEN AND GINJI
BEING TIED TO AKAGI, AKAGI'S POWER WILL BE CUT IN HALF.
WHEN HE DOES THAT, NATURALLY
IN FACT, THAT COMBO IS AS GOOD AS DEAD.
ONE MAN'S MISTAKE DOESN'T JUST AFFECT ONE MAN
THIS IS THE FEAR THAT DRIVES THE TEAM BATTLE.
IN THE MIDDLE OF A BATTLE, THE WEAK ARE BAD...
HE'S DRAGGING THE OTHERS DOWN
CUTTING DOWN ON THEIR FIGHTING ABILITIES.

ONE DUMB SOLDIER CAN LEAD AN ENTIRE COMPANY TO ITS DEATH...!
A SORT OF POISON...